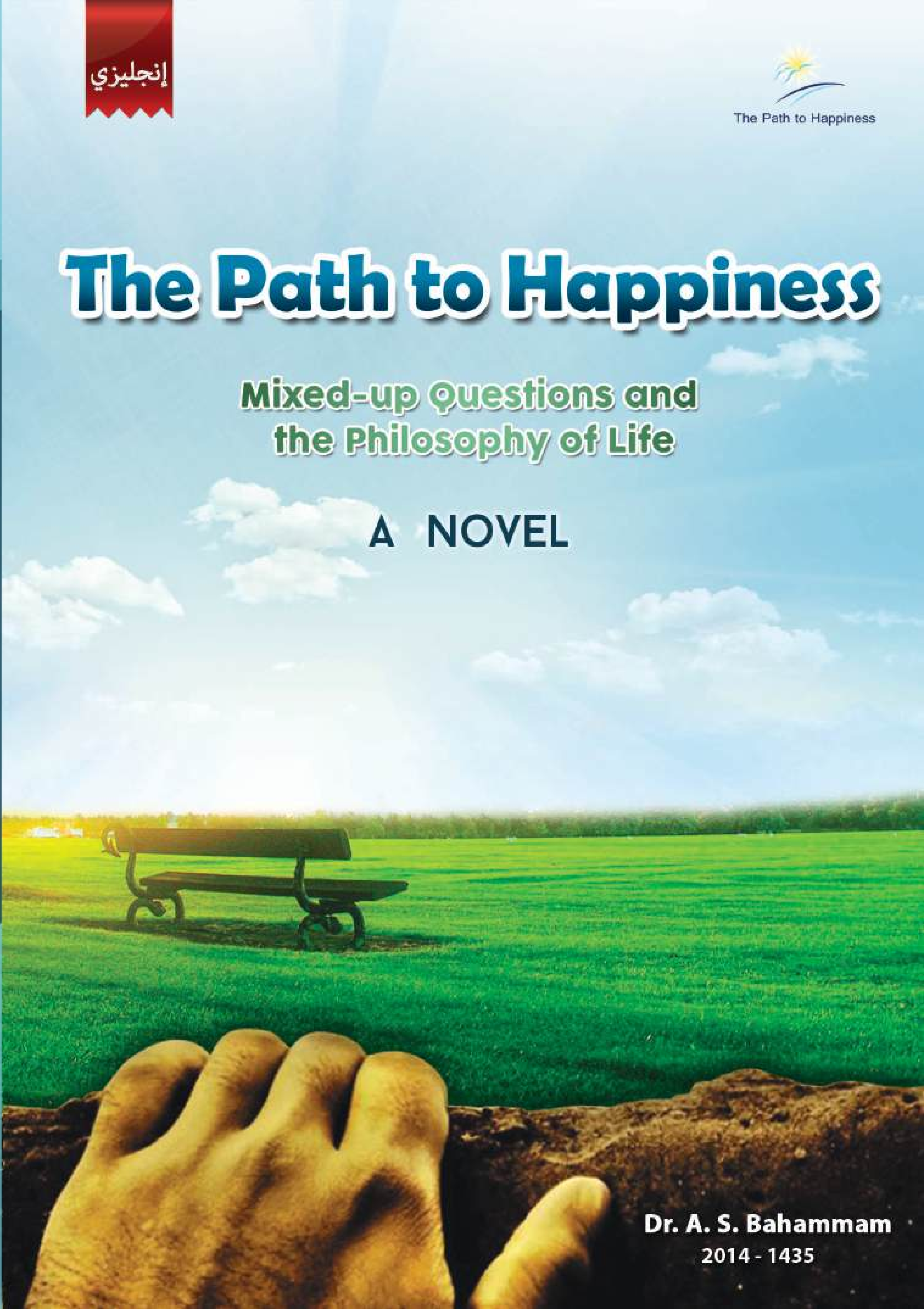
A Novel

THE PATH TO HAPPINESS

Mixed up Question sand the Philosophy of Life

Dr. A. S. Bahammam



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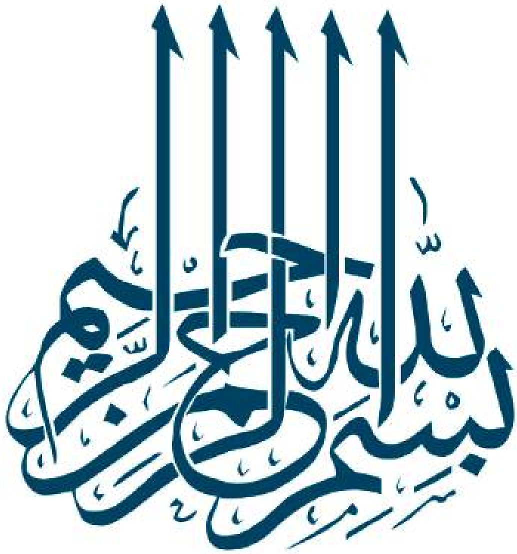
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The Old Man

1

The Old Man

The Old Man

(1)

He made up his mind after he had become severely depressed. He grabbed a paper and wrote:

"Katrina, my love, I'm leaving for good. I will end my misery that never seems to abandon me. To put it frankly: I will end my life. Forgive me, and may the children forgive me too."

- He proceeded to carry out his plan …

He was hesitant, though he reconsidered the situation many a time. He could not find a way out of what he was suffering from except by committing suicide. He was walking at a slow pace, talking to himself: "Am I really sick? Katrina always says that I am! She always urges me to have faith and be certain (about God and His help), and repeatedly she says to me:

- "Doubt is a disease, George, do not surrender to it."

Even his father thought he was sick. He was always repeating to him that the disease of suspicion is a genetic one and that it was transferred to George from his mother's family. He always advised him to stop thinking like that, lest he ended up in a psychiatric clinic! His boss at work too, Kach the Jew, laughed at him often, and told him in a sympathetic and satirical tone:

- "Dear George, I'm upset for you so much. You occupy yourself uselessly. What you think about doesn't make you wealthier, and even deprives you from enjoying life."

George was thirty-eight years old, and was married to Katrina, British like him, but of Indian descent. They had married ten years earlier and were blessed with three beautiful children: Mary the eldest (she was supposed to be ten, but she died at the age of seven), Michael (eight years) and Sally (six years). Since the time his eldest daughter Mary had died in a car accident, and because of his continual thinking on the meaning of life and death, as well as his love of philosophy and his sharp intelligence, his head had become overcrowded with

questions. George was an avid reader, he loved reading about philosophy, history and religions, and perhaps this is what prompted him to marry the Catholic Katrina, a teacher of Theology.

George found in her faith a certainty that he missed, in spite of him being a Protestant, for while he was suspicious and skeptical of almost everything and questioned anything, he much admired her acceptance of what he doubted and her total submission and resignation, but always justified himself (for having doubts) with the excuse that he possesses an intelligence, reason and logic that the faithful Katrina was not aware of. He endlessly had discussions with her on these topics. These dialogues seemed to be between the mind that he represented and the faith and submission that she represented, or between his true sense of reality and her imaginary idealism. Yet it seemed to Katrina to be dialogues between the submission and certainty that she represented and between the doubts and disease which he represented. Such dialogues always ended in a long silence, and if it was not for the love they felt towards each other they would have divorced years ago.

However, George's increasing uncertainty following the death of his daughter affected these dialogues between them, making them more intense and difficult. His mind was dominated and occupied with weighty questions, such as: Why are we created? What do we live for? What is our fate? Although these questions seemed simple and easy, yet they are very complex, and it was for that reason that intelligent philosophers who formed the concepts of existence and life tackled them. He thought that the answer to these questions would result in stability for mankind, its quietude and happiness.

As he was walking on his way to commit suicide, many scenes of his life flashed before his eyes. He remembered his daughter struggling with death in the ambulance on her way to the hospital; but death defeated her, taking away her beauty and her life, and taking his spirit with her. He remembered his son, Michael, who asked him one day when he looked exhausted from the pressures of work:

- Michael: Dad, why do you go to work every day?
- George: In order to have a goal in life, and to provide you with what you need and love.
- Michael: What do you mean by a goal in life?!

- George: Serving the people and benefiting mankind.
- Michael: Why?!

George let loose a sigh, feeling that the question shook him vigorously from the inside, then he answered his son:

- George: For a great reason that you might never know, and neither I!
- Michael: You’re big, Dad, and yet you do not know that reason! When I grow up I’ll know everything, I’ll not leave anything great without knowing it.
- George: Michael…forget it my darling...

He laughed and said to himself: “This is the advice given to me on a daily basis: ‘Forget these questions and enjoy your life.’” He then went on to say to his son:

- George: Don’t worry, I’ll answer you someday.
- Michael: Dad, you finished your studies and have read a lot, and you still do not know!
- George: Have you finished your homework, my darling?
- Michael :Yes, Dad.
- George: Then goodnight, son.

He went on speaking to himself as he walked with burdened steps: “It seems that I am sick indeed as Katrina says, or an imbecile wasting my life away as Kach says, or may be as my father says, or ignorant as little Michael says! Michael’s probably right, but the funny thing is that I answered him as the others had answered me: ‘Forget it!’ It seems that I’ve learned to look for any means to escape to just continue living, like other people do!”

On his way to the place where he wanted to commit suicide, he remembered the day when he was attacked by severe depression. He had drunken wine until he had become totally drunk, then went out driving and collided into a wall. He scrambled out of his car staggering, clutching onto a book that he had taken with him entitled The Philosophy of Happiness. The Traffic policemen grabbed him, saying:

- Policeman: Is that the philosophy of happiness or that of suicide?! Do not you know the offense of drunk driving?!

Katrina bailed him out of the traffic station, and she said to him:

- Katrina: You shouldn’t have driven while you were drunk.

George replied to her sarcastically:

- George; Isn’t this your advice to me; to forget?
- Katrina: Yes, but not in this way.
- George: Why do you stay up and drink (alcohol) every day?
- Katrina: I drink and celebrate in ceremonies in the service of Christ, in Church.

Mischievously, George said to her:

- George: A sacred cup and a blessed hallucination, or is it another way for escaping?!
- George continued: The dialogue with you has become tiresome! You are afraid of thinking, and you run to the bottle and stay up late, exactly like I do, but you dress what you do with a robe of sacredness.

George’s words were very harsh ones. Katrina sighed sadly with frustration, and then said:

- Katrina: At least I don’t need a psychiatrist like you!
- George: Maybe! Who knows?!

(2)

While he was on his way that seemed very long for him, his head was about to burst from the thoughts and memories colliding in it, and the feelings of hesitance and bewilderment alarmingly storming him. He looked at the movement of people around him, and saw them as being soulless, meaningless machines in motion, and wondered to himself how people allowed themselves to become such soulless machines. As he was walking dejectedly he saw a seventy-year-old man happily playing with his grandson. The old man’s smiles and laughs gripped his attention and curiosity and so he approached him and said:

- George: Sorry to interrupt, are you happy?

The old man looked up to him in surprise and said:

- Old man: Yes... Then he went on playing with his grandson.

George interrupted him again and asked:

- George: How? I mean, why are you happy? What do you live for?

The old man scrutinized him closely and then said:

- Old man: You’ve just answered your own question.
- George: How?
- Old man: I’m happy because I know what I am living for, it is that simple.
- George: What should I live for? Please tell me.

- Old man: Ask yourself that question! I can’t answer that question, only your soul and your life should answer it.
- George: I beg you tell me.
- Old man: I just told you that this question must be answered by simply both your soul and your life; I can’t tell you something about which your own soul and life are not convinced.

Then the old man continued firmly:

- Old man: Are you a teenager who wants me to dictate to you my vision of life and the universe, or are you used to being dependent on others? Please don’t distract me from playing with my grandson.
- George: I apologize again, but how can my soul and my life answer me?
- Old man: I feel sincerity in your words so let me tell you something: If you look at a necklace, you’ll find that its beads can’t be kept together except by a thin thread that arranges them to make a beautiful necklace. Likewise, our lives must have a fine thread of knowledge, which is the reason for which we live and exist...and are happy, as well.
- George: How? Tell me!
- Old man: If you are honest then the key to the answer is in searching, with perseverance and determination, and attempting to reach an aim.
- -George: Reach what?
- Old man: Happiness!
- George: How?
- Old man: Look for the path to happiness! Your soul will find company, and your life and the universe will have a meaning! Please excuse me, but don’t take any more of my time; I want to play with my grandson.
- George: Alright... alright, I don’t know this road to happiness, but perhaps if I persist I might reach it, as you say! That is, if it does exist in the first place!
- Old man: It does exist, believe me, otherwise life wouldn’t have any meaning. In any case, please bring me the good news when you do find the answer, and you’ll find it if you are determined. You’ll learn the meaning of how your soul and your life give you the answers. You’ll find the thread that gives meaning to all sides of your life.
- George: I hope so, but what’s your name and where do you live?
- Old man: If I’m still alive by then, you will find me at this place, at this time, every Friday. If you give me your address, and I shall send you my address later.

Then he turned to his grandson and threw him the ball.

- George: Thank you, this is my address.

After he gave him his address he walked away.

He strolled along a little. He felt a form of fatigue and tiredness that he had never felt before, not even on the days when he was overburdened by work. He decided to drink a little alcohol, to regain some of his strength and his mind, for he felt that his head was on the verge of bursting. However, he over-drank and started staggering all over the place. He soon started feeling so dizzy that all the features of things around him became lost, and he fainted while walking in the street.

People gathered around him and started to carry him, so he pulled himself up and told them where he lived.

At the door, he found Katrina crying and sobbing for him. When she saw him, she ran towards him and threw herself tearfully on his chest. He said:

- George: This is me, still alive, unfortunately, not dead.
- Katrina: Thank God for your safety. I was so scared. Why are you thinking of suicide?
- George: To get rid of that robot named George! The machine that doesn't know the meaning of his existence and life, and whose soul keeps dying and feels miserable all the time. If it wasn't for the old man who I met on the road and if it wasn't for the wine, I would have ridden myself from this life!
- Katrina: Who is this old man that you are speaking of?!
- George said sarcastically: I don't know, but he was happy and knows how to live.
- Katrina: I don't understand anything of what you are saying, but thank God you are safe!
- George: Even I didn't understand it properly. All that I did understand is that the path to happiness needs perseverance, exploration and determination in order to reach the destination.
- Katrina: The path to happiness! You will reach it eventually my darling! What is important is that you do not lose your life doing that. We need you.
- George (laughing): I'll try not to lose my life so that I can search until I find the answer and be happy, like that old man.

Katrina noticed fatigue on his face. She held his hand and helped him to get to the bedroom and to lie down on the bed.

The occurrences of that day kept going through his head, over and over again, like horrific ghosts, until he fell into a deep sleep.

The Old Man

Mixed-up Questions

2 Mixed-up Questions

Mixed-up Questions

(1)

Katrina turned to George as soon as the movie that they were watching together ended, so as to bring him out of his long chain of wandering thoughts.

- Katrina: George! George! Don’t you want to get over all you are going through?
- George: What do you mean?! Yes.. Sure!
- Katrina: Our new neighbor told me about the famous psychiatrist Tom Erickson. She said that she sought treatment with him.

George sat up straight and turned to face her. There were mixed expressions on his face that showed that he was troubled. He remarked sarcastically:

- George: Great! Now I have to go to a psychiatrist to ask him to please teach me how to forget that I do not know the reason I was created or why I am alive?!!
- Katrina: No, rather to ask him how you can find out why you were created and why you are alive?
- George: And he’s supposed to know the answer?!
- Katrina: Yes.

George bent his head backwards, and his usual obsessive thoughts soon took him away. Anxiety and trouble took hold of him again while he was engrossed in his thoughts. Katrina noticed that he was wandering off once again, and she realized that once he started to wander, his concerns and fears would take hold of him again, so she called out to him loudly:

- Katrina: George!
- George: What? What? …..I want to ask you something: Is that Dr. Tom of yours a Catholic? Or do you have another cause for your enthusiasm?
- Katrina: George, my darling ... My enthusiasm is for us to live happily together. You may be right in that I deliberately escape from myself, but is that not better than the life of confusion and uncertainty that you are experiencing now?!

- George: Well, I’ve already made my decision that I’ll search for the path to happiness. I won’t run away any more. Instead, I’ll endeavor to find the answer…. He smiled, and continued: However, I’ll not be searching for that path with the help of a Catholic priest! Let me inquire about that doctor first.
- Katrina: Let’s inquire about him, and I pray to the Lord that the doctors will be able to heal you.
- George (laughing): Ha ha ha, so now I am a patient who needs to be treated, and not a philosopher searching for an answer?!!
- Katrina: The treatment is to reach the answer, and not because you are sick... She winked at him and threw herself over his chest, and said: Do we agree on that, darling?
- George: Yes, agreed.

(2)

George was keen to get some information about Dr. Tom before making an appointment to visit him. He went to his Facebook page and read about the conferences that he attended and the type of research papers that he presents. He also read what his patients wrote about him. An almost full picture was formed in George’s mind about this excellent international psychiatrist; highly intelligent, well-cultured and a lover of philosophy - one that was able to blend between modern medicine and a variety of philosophical schools.

George read through the patients› views and comments. He realized that Dr. Tom is also someone with eccentric behavior; his knowledge and psychiatry contradict his personal conduct, especially in his relationships with his female patients. George also noted that Dr. Tom was not Catholic, as he thought, rather he was not religious at all. He was an atheist who did not believe in religion, as a whole.

George, time after time, postponed the booking of his appointment at the doctor›s office. He did not feel even the slightest desire to go to a doctor that opposed the very reason for his quest. Though he promised Katrina that he would go, he continued to procrastinate until one day she surprised him with an appointment that she had made for him at four o›clock that afternoon, and that she would accompany him too. He consented to her wish despite his dissatisfac-

tion with this particular doctor! He said to himself: «This is a futile attempt, but it will not harm me and will at least help me get Katrina off my back.»

George and Katrina went to the doctor. The clinic was quiet, elegantly furnished, with matching and comfortable colors. Nothing disturbed the calm scene except a man with suspicious looks and features sitting at the front desk. George told the receptionist that he had an appointment. He coldly replied:

- Receptionist: My name is Brad. I have not seen you before. I think that the doctor is busy right now.

George turned to Katrina, and said to her:

- George: Didn't you book the appointment?
- Katrina: Yes, I was here three days ago and I did!

Brad slyly replied:

- Brad: Yes, yes, sorry, now I remember; you did book an appointment. Please go in, he is waiting for you.

George went in with Katrina, feeling surprised and offended by Brad's bad attitude. Dr. Tom welcomed them and asked:

- Dr. Tom: Could I please speak with each of you separately?

George replied:

- George: But the appointment is just for me!
- Dr. Tom: Katrina is your wife and she is the person closest to you in your life. She'll be a great help in understanding your situation. I would like to sit down with her first for a few minutes, and then sit down with you.

George went out to the reception room and sat down on one of the seats in silence, feeling highly annoyed. Brad said to him:

- Brad: So I see that Dr. Tom is in session with Katrina!
- George: And how do you know her name?
- Brad: She's the lady who came three days ago to book your appointment.

He smiled slyly and said:

- Brad: Yes, Dr. Tom is sitting alone with her - lucky him, a handsome man sitting with a woman which has the charm of the East.

George grabbed a magazine to keep himself from being distracted by Brad.

As he stifled his anger and discontent, he remembered Tom's suspicious relationships with his female patients. He almost went out of his artificial calmness, but contained himself. He thought it better to wait a bit, though with the passage of time his annoyance and irritation only worsened.

Katrina came out ten minutes later laughing, and called her husband:

- Katrina: Darling, the doctor›s waiting for you. I›ll go now. I have an appointment at the church.

George went in. The smile which was on the doctor's face quickly disappeared and he received George with rigid features. Dr. Tom asked George:

- Dr. Tom: Why do you want to know who created you, why you are alive and what your final destination will be is?
- George: Because I want my life to have some meaning, something that puts my soul and my existence in order.
- Dr. Tom: Mmm…It seems that I am sitting before a distinctive and well-cultured case. Why don't you use the philosophical ways of thinking?
- George: I don't understand, what do you mean?
- Dr. Tom: How don't you understand, O philosopher! When we answer in a philosophical manner, each answer is based on a package of questions that helps to find the answer.

He was quite for a while, then added:

- Dr. Tom: In order to answer your questions, I'll have to ask you some other questions first, for example: where can we find the answer? Rather than delve into the answer, let's search for where we can find it. Moreover, what are the criteria needed for it to be correct? Do you not agree with me that this is a logical, philosophical and convenient way to deal with the questions?
- George: Perhaps…
- Dr. Tom: The advantage of this method is its ability to extract answers from inside you and your soul. He smiled and continued: It is undoubtedly better than the Catholic method which is based upon the complete acceptance of contradictions, without any reason! Let's meet again next week. Try to bring me answers to the following two questions: where can we get the answer from, and what guarantees that the answer will be correct? Do we agree on this?

- George: Despite the bad things you've just said about Catholicism, what you said is logical and rational. Yes, agreed.

George left the doctor's room. His eyes fell on Brad, who met him with a sly smile:

- Brad: A successful session, and give my greetings to Katrina!

(3)

Tom's questions, his method of talking and the logical way he thought all received a great deal of assessment from George. He was driving and talking to himself:

"The questions that I initially had are now even more troublesome because of what Dr. Tom said. What that doctor did was merely add more questions to those which I already had!"

He went to a nearby café and ordered a cup of coffee. The waiter brought the coffee and put it on the table, but George was so deep in thought that he did not notice him. The waiter coughed gently to alert him, but he was so absorbed in his thinking that the waiter finally left him. After a while George realized that there was a lukewarm cup of coffee on his table. He called the waiter and paid him the check, and then said to him:

- George: Imagine that! I did not notice that you brought me the coffee. Sometimes our internal questions distract us even from ourselves!
- The waiter: Internal questions are signs of awareness and intelligence, but...but if there is a surplus of such questions, then that is a sign of internal conflict, and contradictions in beliefs and ideas.

George was taken aback by the waiter's words and analysis, so he continued his dialogue with him:

- George: What causes these conflicts or contradictions in your opinion?
- The waiter: Many things; the most important of them is that a person has not reached a satisfying answer about the major issues for which he lives, such as: why are we created? Why are we alive? What will our final destination be? The problem lies in complexity, for simplicity offers us deep answers to those questions more than that which complexity does, since complexity does not usually go

further than the outside surface of any problem.

George opened his eyes in surprise:

- George: And how do we find the simple answers to these questions?
- The waiter: A lot of people escape from answering these questions by occupying themselves with trivialities, drinking alcohol, sex, and so on. Inquiring about such matters are one of the important signs of awareness, but...

Another customer summoned the waiter, interrupting their short dialogue. The waiter apologized to George, took the money for the cup of coffee and went away.

George left and drove his car aimlessly, in no particular direction. He could not forget the words of the waiter for they stirred him, agitated his mind and touched his feelings. He wished the waiter could have completed what he was saying, even if he paid him ten times the price of the coffee. He was surprised by that feeling of trust that he felt towards this waiter, despite him being a simple worker, and a complete stranger. His features and looks indicated that he might have been Greek or of Latin descent.

An hour later, George found himself still driving around in the same area, so he decided to go back to the cafe again. He returned and sat down at the table and ordered his usual coffee. Another waiter brought it, so George asked him about the earlier waiter.

- The waiter: Who do you mean, sir?
- George: I was here an hour ago and I was served by another waiter of Greek or Latin descent.
- The waiter: Maybe it was Cat or Adam. Sorry, but both of them finished their shift about an hour ago and now it’s our shift.

George quickly gulped down his coffee, and when he was leaving he asked the waiter:

- George: When does Cat or Adam’s next shift start?
- The waiter: Tomorrow at nine in the morning, until five or six o’clock in the evening.
- George: Thank you.

(4)

George returned to his home and was received by his two sons. He asked them about their mother. Michael told him that she was still in the church, and that maybe she was delayed a little that night.

George sat in the lounge waiting for Katrina to return from the church. When she returned it was ten in the evening. She was exhausted and cumbersome, reeking of alcohol, although still conscious of what was happening around her. The moment she saw George she asked him:

- Katrina: What happened at the doctor?
- George: He's an eccentric doctor, somewhat convincing though. He turned resolutely to Katrina: What did he want from you when you sat alone together?
- Katrina: I do not know, darling. He just welcomed me, and introduced himself and told me what he could do for you, and then asked me about my work and my life... He was very tactful and polite…
- George: Also very handsome! Didn't he ask you anything about me?
- Katrina: Yes, but only when I was about to leave. I told him that you are worried about your questions about life!
- George: That›s all?!
- Katrina: Yes, that›s all. Most of the time he was talking about himself and about me. How polite he was!
- George: Hmmm. What you say about him is strange though, as he is an atheist and does not believe in religion, and even fights religiosity; thinks that it is a disease. And he seems to me to be very insolent too!
- Katrina: George! He was very kind and polite with me! He did not talk to me about religion at all, even when he knew that I am a teacher of theology. Anyway, you went to him for his knowledge of psychiatry, not for his religion or for his manners!
- George: And with whom did you stay up late drinking?
- Katrina: You are not my guardian, and it is my right not to answer that question, but still I will: we were in a ceremony that had the priest›s blessings.

George was often annoyed by Katrina's evening ceremonies, and her drink-

ing of wine. He found it contrary to the religiosity for the sake of which she exerted time and effort. However, it seemed to him that perhaps he was a little harsh on her. He tried to change the course of their conversation. He said, sarcastically:

- George: I went with a set of questions and the man just added more to them, and more confusion to that which I already have!
- Katrina: How was that?
- George: Instead of answering my questions, he asked me other ones and asked me to answer them too.
- Katrina: More questions!
- George: Yes, where do we get the answers to these questions, and what guarantees that these answers are correct?
- Katrina: Despite these bizarre questions, maybe he is right!
- George: Let’s leave the topic now. I met another bizarre man today. He shook me from inside and, by coincidence, talked with me about the very topic for which I had visited the doctor!
- Katrina: The same one, how coincidental!
- George: Indeed, this is one of the most bizarre coincidences!
- Katrina: What did he say to you?!
- George: I do not know exactly. He did not complete his discussion with me; but it seems to me that he, unlike Dr. Tom, is a religious man. He was talking about relying on simplicity in answering questions and about the depth of simplicity, and the meaning of life and happiness. He then stared hard into her eyes and said: And about people escaping from answering them by drinking alcohol and staying up late at parties and so on!
- Katrina: As he is a religious man, then his words must be correct. Perhaps he was just a little harsh on the subject of escaping from answers! She smiled and said: Maybe he is Catholic! My darling, you look tired and it seems that you cannot focus on what you are saying!
- George: Maybe...Maybe, the thing is that he shook me from the inside. Anyway, let’s go to sleep now. I have a lot of work to do in the morning.

George and Katrina walked to the bedroom. Once they got ready to sleep,

Katrina's mobile phone rang. She looked at it in confusion, and then she answered and welcomed the caller quickly, using short words, and then remained silent for a long time listening. Then she ended the call.

- Katrina: We have an appointment on Wednesday, at eight in the evening. We'll spend the evening together in the church.
- George: Who was the caller?!
- Katrina: Someone who wants to learn about Catholicism.
- George: He wants to learn about Catholicism in the evening!
- Katrina: In the church, not in a casino or a brothel! Or would you rather he learn about it in the cemetery! Let's go to sleep, you have become too sensitive.

(5)

In the morning, George woke up before Katrina and the first thing that came to his mind was the waiter whom he did not know and what was behind the secret of his attraction to him. He made up his mind to make a stop by the coffee shop again to meet him. He soon remembered the phone call that took place the previous night. He did not know why, but he took Katrina's mobile phone, switched it on and wrote down the number of the person who had phoned her the previous night, and then returned it to its place.

George went to work early as he had a backlog of work, especially since he asked permission to leave early the day before to visit the doctor. He had just entered his office and started his work when the phone rang. It was Kach; his boss:

- Kach: Good morning.
- George: Good morning.
- Kach: How was your visit to the doctor yesterday?
- George: Okay I guess. I'm still at the beginning, things will become clearer later.
- Kach: Good, but you are wasting your time and money. Thinking about such matters is a waste of time. For me, if you will tell me who will pay me more I'll make him my God , if you wish... He laughed loudly and then said: Will you come to my office, please? We have urgent business that came up yesterday.

- George: Yes, I’ll come to you, but after an hour, if possible.
- Kach: Hmmm ok, after an hour then.

George phoned the previous night’s caller from a different mobile phone. He heard the voice of Dr. Tom at the other end. George could never be wrong about that voice with its distinct hoarseness. George heard Dr. Tom say on the other side: Hello... Hello…Who is it? Can you hear me?

George immediately hung up feeling irate. Why did Katrina not just tell him that it was Dr. Tom who was calling her? Why did she hide his identity from him? Why ...? Is this entire life full of complex questions?!

George went back to his work. He tried to finish some of the work he had quickly. Exactly an hour later he was in Kach’s office. Kach stood to welcome him and said:

- Kach: My friend, did the doctor cure you from your obsession?
- George: I am neither obsessed nor sick. I went to the doctor so that he would help me answer my questions.
- Kach: It seems to be a sensitive topic for you. I was only teasing and you know my opinion well. Forget that matter now and concern yourself only with increasing your money and enjoying life and its pleasures. Anyhow, let’s put that aside now. I requested to meet with you because the technological employment company in India sent us note saying it agrees to our terms. We need to quickly employ a number of employees from that company to strengthen our alliance with the software distribution company in India. One of us must travel to India within two weeks. Are you ready?
- George: So soon?!
- Kach: Yes, unfortunately. And I cannot travel since the trustees meeting, as you know, will be held in two weeks.
- George: I›ll check my state of affairs at home and confirm with you during the next few days. Would you please load complete copies of the contracts and agreements on the intranet network for me to read and study? I›ll see you next week when things will be clearer for me.
- Kach: So, until next week then. I hope that you will prepare yourself for the trip... He smiled slyly: Put that doctor›s business aside, I have a surprise for you which

I›ll tell you about next week.

Bewildered, George went back to his office. He studied the contracts and agreements which Kach had loaded for him on the company’s intranet network. He wanted to travel, but he was busy with three things: the waiter, the doctor and Katrina!

Since the morning he had made up his mind to pay a visit to the waiter. As for the doctor’s appointment, he could tell him he would postpone his usual appointment before embarking on his trip; but what about Katrina?! Is it possible that his religious wife was having an affair with the atheist Dr. Tom?! How impossible!!

After work, George went to the café hoping to meet the waiter. When he saw him, he felt a relief that surprised him. He sat down at the table, and the waiter came and asked him:

- Waiter: Your order, sir?
- George: Coffee please...One moment, is your name Cat or Adam?
- Waiter: Adam, sir.

The waiter went to fetch the coffee, and when he returned George said to him:

- George: Could you sit down, please, I want to talk to you?
- Waiter: Sorry sir, It’s my pleasure to serve you, but I have other tasks to do.
- George: Would you allow me to give you a lift home after your shift?
- Waiter: How generous of you sir, okay then.... At least I won’t have to ride the bus... my shift will be over after half an hour.
- George: I’ll wait and drink my coffee until you are ready, and I assure you that it will be my pleasure to give you a lift.
- The waiter: Thank you. Excuse me.

George sat slowly sipping away at his coffee, recalling Adam’s words which had shaken him so violently, and asking himself: “How amazing is this waiter! How could he, in a few moments, understand me even though he does not know me? How did he realize that I am suffering from thinking about these critical issues, greedily seeking to know the answer? Depth with simplicity, what a philosophy!”

Adam interrupted George's chain of thoughts and said to him with a smile after he had changed his work clothes:

- Adam: I'm ready, should we get going?
- George: I am ready too. Do you want to go home, or should I invite you for a cup of coffee in this cafe, or dinner at a nearby restaurant?
- Adam: If the choice is mine, I'd prefer the third.
- George: The Happiness Restaurant nearby might be appropriate.
- Adam: Very appropriate, I like its name, the spirit of happiness is a beauty that is overlooked by a lot of people, unfortunately, in this time of confusion, uncertainty and unhappiness!
- Adam's words had a severe impact on George. He felt them targeting and besieging him, but he preferred to remain silent.

(6)

George and Adam entered the Happiness Restaurant and they found its name most fitting to its atmosphere inside, for the colors of the décor were cheerful, and the lighting brilliant; all of which really enriched the atmosphere with comfort and happiness.

They sat at one of the side tables and the restaurant waiter brought them the menu. George said to Adam:

- George: Please, choose whatever you want to eat.
- Adam: Okay, I want fried fish with green salad.
- George: For me a beef steak with potatoes, please.

Once the waiter left, George said to Adam:

- George: Here we are in the Happiness Restaurant. Yes, happiness, that feeling which many people lack in this time of doubt, confusion and despondency...as you said!
- Adam: It is true. Yes, doubt and confusion seem to kill the meaning of life, people are transformed into cogwheels in a solid machine, without any sense of their movement or taste; just machines that do not understand the meaning of happiness, let alone live it.

- George: So you are one of the supporters of escaping from confusion and uncertainty to blind submission?
- Adam: Never...never! Escaping makes one's condition worse, even if he may show otherwise. The first condition is one who is hungry and is screaming that he is hungry, and the second is one who is hungry but is screaming that he wants to sleep!
- George: Ha ha, then both of them are hungry!
- Adam: Except the first is wiser and smarter in dealing with himself.
- George: Answer me honestly: are you happy?
- Adam: Ha ha, you want a simple answer: Yes, happiness is an impression of our view of ourselves, of life and of the souls in the universe.
- George: I'm afraid that your happiness is like that of my wife who is religious, who, in your own words, escapes from answering by drinking and staying out late! Then there was a short silence, and then he said: What is the meaning of life, in your opinion?
- Adam: The person who escapes from answering big questions will never feel happy, even if he or she claims to impersonate and represent happiness...As for your question about the meaning of life; it is, in reality, composed of the three questions, namely: why are we created? Why are we alive, and what is our final destination or where are we heading?
- George: So what are the answers to these questions then?
- Adam: Do you think that there is a person who feels, tastes, smells and breathes happiness and yet doesn't know the answer to these questions?!
- George: Give me a clear answer please. Do you know the answer to these questions?
- Adam: I think that I have answers which are very clear and convincing to me, but the answer does not lie in conveying my beliefs to you - you apparently know more than I. I'm still a university student majoring in the study of religions, while you, on the other hand, are a senior engineer.... The other thing is that the answer is that answer which our soul and our life provide, so then logically, even if I gave you any answer, would it mean anything to you if it is not a part of your soul and your way of thinking?

- George: You remind me of an old man I met on the road. He claimed that he was happy, and he told me exactly what you’re saying now.
- Adam: Do you mean that I’m wise and speak as a man who has lots of experience and knows the world, or that I’m philosophizing things using words that do not make sense?! In any case, your problem will only be solved by persistently trying to reach the answer.
- George: It is as if you are speaking the old man›s very words! But, to try what exactly?
- Adam: Try to answer these questions, to be happy in your life... Then he looked deep into George›s eyes and said: Let me ask you a question: Where can we find this answer?
- George: Hmmm! Now you are saying what the doctor said!
- A tiny chuckle escaped from Adam, but then he continued:
- Adam: My oh my, you›re a combination of quizzes! What doctor are you talking about? Was the old man a doctor?
- George: Sorry, it seems that I am tired. No, not the old man. They are two different people. I am currently being treated by a doctor in my quest to find happiness, for I have been extremely troubled by these questions and they have caused me much worry and grief.
- Adam: How is that? Did the grief of these questions reach such an extent that you need to see a doctor?! I assure you that there is no answer from outside your soul and your life. Anyway, is what I said similar to what the doctor said?
- George: He said that before searching for the answer, we must determine where we can actually find the answer.
- Adam: From my point of view, this is a fair and simple way to present the matter. Simplicity is the key to success and to achieving the truth. Complexity on the other hand is a cause of failure, fatigue and confusion…your doctor seems to be logical and good, is he?
- George: Logical, yes, but I do not think he is good. He is someone who you don›t feel comfortable with, and it also seems that he is immoral.
- Adam: So what do you intend to do then?
- George: I›m not sure. I›m thinking of continuing my treatment with him until I

see some results, but please answer me: where can we find the answer?

- Adam: Sorry, I do not want to contradict the doctor, what did the doctor say?

George laughed at Adam's response, and although he felt that he was encircling him and compelling him to answer, he was enjoying himself while he was contemplating over how Adam was avoiding giving him an answer...He did not want to answer, so it seemed, but why?!

- George: He said to me that I should search myself, and asked me where the answer could come from. And what guarantees that the answer is correct?
- Adam: A beautiful, wonderful, simple and profound beginning, but I'm not a doctor to evaluate the doctor's opinion!
- George: Where can we find the answers?
- Adam: Look inside your soul by analyzing the various religions.
- George: Religions!!
- Adam: Yes... religions; if it isn't in religions, would you rather we look into atheism?!
- George: How much I hate atheism! It is a defect in reason and knowledge.
- Adam: So, then one must look into religions.
- George: Most probably. I'm going on a business trip to India which is a country full of ideas and religions. Will my travelling there help me to get to know different approaches?
- Adam: Well I'm not a doctor to criticize or rectify, you'd better ask your doctor, but I'll tell you my opinion, frankly: it's good to know the systems employed by these ideas, religions and sects in order to answer these questions, and the more the system is simple, smooth, logical, and realistic and also satisfies the soul and life, the more the answer is closer to the truth.
- George: And how do you suggest I look into these ideas and religions?!
- Adam: My opinion is to first get a general view.
- George: How?!
- Adam: We can think and distinguish two approaches: one based on religion, and another based on atheism, as we have just said a little while ago, and I'm definitely with the view that is based on religion. Did I tell you that I am a student of

religious studies?

The waiter came with food. George preferred to end the dialogue in fear of his guest becoming upset - this guest who was sitting with him for the first time but to whom he felt so close as if he had known him for a long time.

- George: I don't want to keep you from enjoying your meal, and it seems that I am burdening you, but the fact is that I need your help. Maybe my meeting and knowing you is only recent, but I feel very comfortable with your words and I hope I am not inconveniencing you too much.
- Adam: No, by all means not; you are not inconveniencing me in the least. Your invitation to dinner is enough for me, especially since it is in the Happiness Restaurant!

While they were eating, George tried to change the course of the discussion and he found an interesting subject in food and cuisines that might gradually ease the philosophical atmosphere that had enveloped them....However, he soon returned the wheel of the discussion to their first dialogue, because inside himself there was a strong curiosity towards Adam, and his cautious manner of answering.

- George: Why is it that the approach of religion is more worthy of my attention than that of atheism? By the way, my doctor is an atheist who denies all religions and even makes fun of them, in fact.
- Adam: Though I predict from your words that he is an excellent doctor, yet I'm sure that atheists are the most miserable people and that they are continuously escaping from themselves. As for why the approach of religion is more worthy than that of atheism, this has many details that I can put in a nutshell through the following quick points: First: is it plausible that someone knows why we were created better than our Creator Himself? In other words, the only way we are be able to find out why we were created is through the Creator Himself? Atheism denies the existence of the Creator, the Lord God. Second: Atheism contradicts itself in every part of its theories; because it assumes that the world is moving according to precise laws that do not change, and that this precision was created by chance and without any system or creator. Thirdly: they, that is the atheists, often hide their faith in God inside themselves. What they hide clearly comes out when they are hit by a tragedy or a calamity. The first thing they say is: "O God". Fourth: I'll

be candid; do you think that atheism is the truth, or an attempt to escape from the truth, even if this escape is to a mirage or a vacuum in the soul?!

- George: Just one of these points is enough, and they are even more convincing when you put them all together! I completely agree with you, so you needn’t say any more. Atheism is an illusion which makes its follower think that it is a scientific, not a metaphysical, way of thinking, while in fact its way of thinking is completely unreasonable and unscientific, and leads one to lie to himself and then lie to others too. Afterward he added: But the main issue is: which religion should we follow? Religions are as many as the number of human communities... He laughed and said: No, wait, perhaps even more!
- Adam: I totally agree with you. They say there are more than 10,000 religions, and in Christianity alone there are 33,830 different sects! But would you not like to continue discussing the general view first?!
- George: What do you mean?
- Adam: We divided the approach, in general, into believers and atheists, isn’t that so?
- George: Yes.
- Adam: Depending on the general view, religions and faith are of two types: either religions of a heavenly decent coming from God, or those that are earthly and manmade.
- George: I understand what you are saying. Which one do you think is better then?
- Adam: Don’t worry about what I think! Didn’t you say that you are travelling to India?
- George: Yes; and what does that have to do with our subject?
- Adam: India is a country rich in ideas, religions, sects and beliefs, both earthly and heavenly. In India, you can compare between the followers of the heavenly and manmade religions, and see them actually in practice, not in theory.
- George: Though I have a clear opinion about that, I do not mind postponing the topic until after my return from India. I have a question though: do you think that this is the path and the procedure that might take me to the answer?
- Adam: Guidance, success and certainty are granted by God. If you are sincere in your search, I believe you’ll get there. The important thing is to have a true inten-

tion, and to be persistent and make sure you take things simply, without complications, and cheerfully, not pessimistically.

- George: There you go again, sounding just like the old man!
- Adam: Where might I meet this old man? You have made me want to know him.
- Adam: I do not know, I really do not know. I was in a very bad state at the time and he took my phone number, but I did not take his. He said he would be in contact with me. Oh, by the way: could you give me your number and your email address?

Adam tore out a piece of paper from a small notebook he carried with him, and wrote his phone number, e-mail address and his Facebook page link. He gave them to George and said:

- Adam: I'm sorry, you know that I'm just a waiter and I don't have a business card to give you!
- George: Don't worry. I'll see you as soon as I return from India, okay?
- Adam: Okay.

Doubt over Unfaithfulness...

3

Doubt over Unfaithfulness...

Doubt over Unfaithfulness...

(1)

Katrina didn’t stay as late in the church as usual. She sat waiting for George’s return, for he in fact was the one who was unusually late. On his arrival she greeted him at the door and asked him about the reason for his delay... His eyes came into contact with hers and he immediately remembered her relationship with Tom and how she had hid the fact that Tom had contacted her. But he didn’t inquire about that and decided to do that later. He said:

- George: I went to meet the waiter that I mentioned to you earlier, and we had dinner together.
- Katrina: How was the meeting? Do you still have the same opinion about him?
- George: It was a wonderful meeting. He is a student of theology, but he speaks in a way that is very simple, easy, convincing...
- Katrina: Enough...enough, what’s all that! You seem to admire him very much. Ha ha ha! But this is what one naturally expects?! It is very normal for someone who is studying theology to be like that. What did he say to you?
- George: His words were similar to those of the old man whom I met when I was on my way to commit suicide, you remember him?
- Katrina: Yes!!
- George: And also similar to what the atheist, Dr. Tom, said too! Isn’t it strange that he is religious, yet speaks like an atheist?!
- Katrina: I see you are taking sides against the doctor because he is an atheist. I did not feel that at all, even though I sat with him.
- George: You mean the session at the clinic when we went, or are there other sessions?!
- Katrina: George! Yes, I mean the clinic session. I told him that I was dedicated to teaching religion and to the church, and he did not comment on that, but rather expressed his admiration.
- George: He boasts of being an atheist, and you can see that on his Facebook page....

He looked hard at her, and then said:

- George: I suspect he is aiming at something else by going along with you were the subject of religion is concerned
- Katrina: What do you mean?!!
- George: Nothing...nothing. Just a thought that came to my mind. Listen, something important has come up, I'll quite probably have to travel to India, what do you think?
- Katrina: Amazing, when?
- George: In about ten days.
- Katrina: You know that I originally come from India, Delhi specifically... India is the land of wonders, George, and it will help you forget a lot of your problems, and will certainly make you feel relaxed; but what about the doctor's appointments?
- George: I have one next Monday, and I'll ask him then to postpone the appointment after it.
- Katrina: Fine.

(2)

George was extremely upset when he found out about Tom's attachment with Katrina, but he forced himself to be calm and feigned indifference. That Wednesday morning he had an idea to pay them a surprise visit at eight in the evening, which happened to be the time of their scheduled appointment that he had overheard in Tom's call with Katrina. He rushed to call Dr. Tom's clinic and asked Brad the receptionist to change his appointment to that evening, if possible.

- Brad: Impossible today.
- George: Why?
- Brad (Amused): Because the doctor has a very, very important appointment at eight in the evening.
- George: Is it that important?
- Brad: Perhaps. The point is that you can't set the appointment for that time.
- Then he blurted out a loud laugh.
- George: I'll come at seven thirty to the clinic. If the other patient is late for his appointment at eight o'clock, I'll see the doctor instead.

- Brad (With a smirk on his face): I told you, you can’t. The other thing is that the appointment is not in the clinic…. And then he said mockingly: You seem to be very keen to come at this particular time. I understand what you want!! You can come and I’ll tell you exactly everything you need to know, and solve all the problems you are suffering from. Then, snickering aloud, he said: I’ll be waiting for you. Don’t be late!

George finished his work and rushed to meet Adam. Tom and Katrina’s matter worried him very much and he felt a need to consult Adam about this topic. He parked his car in front of the café and waited for Adam to finish his shift. George wondered about the reason why he felt so keen to speak to Adam to the extent that he would consult him in such a private matter as that of Katrina and Tom, though George had met Adam only a few days earlier.

Adam saw George’s parked car. He changed his work clothes and went out to him as soon as his shift was over. When George saw him he offered him a ride home, which Adam gladly accepted.

- George: Adam... Have you ever felt suspicious towards the people who are closest to you?
- Adam: Never, but I expect it to be a very harsh feeling!
- George: Are you married?
- Adam: No, I’m not.
- George: What about romantic relationships with the opposite sex?
- Adam: I have no romantic relationships with the opposite sex! What do you want, George?
- George: Did I not once tell you that my doctor is immoral?
- Adam: Yes, you did.
- George: Did I not also once tell you that my wife drinks wine and stays out late, yet she is religious?
- Adam: Yes, that too!
- George (Sighing): I have concerns that there is an unethical relationship going on between them – I mean Dr. Tom and my wife. Am I over concerned or what?

Adam was silent for a moment, contemplating George’s frustrated facial expressions, and then he said:

- Adam: I don’t know what to say to you, but I understand how you feel... the basic principle is that you must think well of people, and as long as you have no proof, there is no point of being hasty in accusing people.

- George: But she is meeting him this evening!
- Adam: Are you sure?! You told me that she often drinks and stays out late, so what is the difference between staying out late with Tom or doing so with others?
- George: Tom’s relationship with his female patients is suspicious, and I’ve heard stories of his infidelity, and Katrina’s bad habit of staying out late is suspicious too. The other thing is that she deliberately hid this relationship from me, and... and the words of Brad were very strange!
- Adam: Who is this Brad?
- George: Tom’s secretary. A very annoying man who continuously makes very disturbing remarks!
- Adam: Now it is six o’clock, so how about calling Katrina and inviting her to dinner at a luxurious restaurant?
- George: Good idea, let me try.

George called Katrina and did his best to disguise his uneasiness in case she sensed the agitated tone of his voice. He suggested to her what Adam had proposed to him and tried to tempt her with the luxurious restaurant, and with a beautiful evening together, but she apologized to him time after time, and she asked him to postpone his invitation to another day saying that she could not fail to attend the ceremony at the church.

- George: You see, she has refused and used the church ceremony as an excuse!
- Adam: So it’s a church ceremony, why then are you accusing her?
- George: It is shameful that the stench of the scandals of the seedy ceremonies of the church is everywhere!
- Adam: Maybe, I do not know!

George arrived at Adam’s house and thanked him for his kindness and support. He said to him:

- George: I don’t know why I disturbed you with my personal matters! Accept my apologies.
- Adam: No need to apologize! I wish I could help you in some way. Goodbye...I just want to tell you something before I go, though: beware of that Brad character you told me about. Don’t let him manipulate you, because we are very vulnerable when we are controlled by doubt and confusion.
- George: I›m tired and so confused, and what›s more is that I must find a solution

before eight o›clock! Sorry Adam, I must dash.

(3)

George's phone rang - it was Brad on the other side. George was not in the mood to receive his provocative comments, but the phone kept ringing so he had to answer him and see what he wanted.

- Brad: Hello….Where are you? I'm waiting for you! Tom left for his important appointment!
- George: Where to?
- Brad: To his appointment. What did you want to know?
- George: I'm tired, Brad, I'm not in the mood for this!
- Brad (Snickering): Come here. I have the solution to your problem.
- George: You have a solution?! Really?! I'm on my way.

George arrived at the clinic and found Brad waiting for him. He asked him in an aggressive tone:

- George: Where's Tom?
- Brad: He left a little while ago.
- George: With who?
- Brad: You know! Come; let's sit in Tom's office!
- George: No, actually I do not know anything! What do you want from me?
- Brad: Of course you do, Tom went out with Katrina.
- George: How do I know that you aren't lying to me?!
- Brad: I'm not!

George lowered his head, not knowing what to do. He suddenly noticed a small lady's bag that was lying on the table. It looked like Katrina's. He lifted his head and cried out in Brad's face:

- George: What's this?
- Brad (Scoffing): Is it possible that Katrina has forgotten her purse?! There you are, proof of what I told you.
- George: Where did they go?!
- Brad: They are spending the evening at the church, I think.
- George: But Tom is an atheist…
- Brad: Why didn›t you go with them? Or is it that they plan something special that cannot be done in your presence?

- He chuckled aloud and then continued:
- I know well the difficulty of what you are feeling, and I have just the thing that will relieve you of this stress.
- George: Oh?! And what is that?
- Brad: A single pill. A pill of happiness! You might have heard about the dangers of recreational drugs, but I›m quite sure that you do not know how much happiness those who take heroine feel! One pill will bring you the happiness that you›re looking for, do you want one?
- George: Okay I guess, but only one!

Brad felt how George was breaking down and surrendering, and so he asked him to wait for a few minutes while he went to fetch it; and he promised that he'd be quick. George was down and out, and under the influence of psychological stress. Once Brad left, he felt an emptiness inside.... He took out his phone and checked the last three dialed numbers, where he found Brad, Katrina and Adam's numbers, and he immediately called Adam.

- Adam: Hello George!
- George: I am sure now of what I said to you earlier.
- Adam: Take it easy! Even if you are certain that they went out together, that does not mean that she is cheating on you.
- George: Adam, I'm emotionally and psychologically drained. Brad left me for a few minutes to bring me what might help to relax my nerves and calm me down.
- Adam: And what is this thing that will relax your nerves and calm you down?!
- George: He told me there is only one pill that I have to take that will solve all my problems!
- Adam: Drugs! Are you crazy man? Didn't I tell you that it is easy to manipulate people in times of confusion and doubt?! George, snap out of it, what's wrong with you? This is escaping. Do you think you will gain happiness by escaping? Please come to me now, I need to talk with you.
- George: I'm so frustrated and feeling overwhelmed at the same time! Brad hasn't come back yet, okay...I'm leaving now, I'll be there shortly.

George arrived at Adam's house in a deplorable condition. He was met by Adam who invited him in. Adam's house was humble, neat and simple. George sat on a chair while Adam prepared him a cup of tea. He felt much better after he had drunk the tea.

- Adam: How do you feel now, George? How about going for a walk, or a jog?
- George: What?! A walk or a jog?! This hardly seems the right time for that.
- Adam: Usually I go for a walk or a jog every day for about 3 to 5km, but today I haven't had the chance yet. Come on George, there is a place near my house where we can go for a walk.
- George: Well...Okay, if you think it'll do me some good…

Adam turned to George while they were walking. He started talking to him about the benefits of sports, and how it improves the morale. He was surprised to see tears in George's eyes.

- George: Do you think that sports can bring happiness to a broken down man like me?! How can I practice sports while my wife is in the arms of another man?!
- Adam: Sports improves the morale, but it can't grant you happiness by itself. Happiness stems solely from within us and sports can't do that for us, and neither can drugs or alcohol!
- George: Well, what can I say to defend myself? I was in a moment of weakness and Brad manipulated me!
- Adam: We should not give criminals opportunities to manipulate us in periods of weakness!
- George: But I don't know what to do, what can help ease this discomfort?! I feel totally down from within while I am walking with you, and my soul is dying here with every step I take and as every moment passes by.
- Adam: What did you use to do before when you were worried, sad or depressed?!
- George: I used to take a sedative which the doctor gave me...But it made me feel drowsy.
- Adam: Now that's better, a sedative from a physician, not a criminal! Do you have these pills with you by any chance?
- George: Yes, they're in the car.
- Adam: Let's go back home then, and go to the car and take one of your pills.
- George: No, I'd rather go home and take it there.
- Adam: Take it and sleep at my house, trust me, it'll be better.
- George: Sleep at your house while I don't know where Katrina is!!
- Adam: Don't make your suspicions evidence against her, when she very well might be with Tom calling him to Christianity!
- George: Maybe that's the case. I wish I could find out just something that might

lessen the doubt that I'm feeling now.

George took the pill and slept deeply for a long time after the effect of the pill had started to work... He woke up at ten in the morning and found that Adam had prepared his breakfast...

- Adam: Good morning, breakfast is ready.
- George: What time is it?
- Adam: It's ten o'clock.
- George: What?! Ten o' clock?!! Oh my, I've made you late for work, and I'm late too.
- Adam: Don't worry about it. I took a day's leave, and you are the deputy director, it won't harm you to be late for one day.

George had his breakfast with Adam. He said to him:

- George: Thank you for your kindness, because I feel greatly relieved and am much better than yesterday.
- Adam: Good, but you need to be calmer. Severe tension and sudden changes often mean that there is no happiness within.
- George: What do you mean?
- Adam: If you resolve your major questions, you›ll be able to deal with your problems far better, and your frame of mind will be clearer when dealing with any stress.
- George: Do you mean that Katrina›s issue is a simple one?
- Adam: No, what I mean is that inner happiness removes our doubts and solves the small elements of our problems. That is why you must focus on reaching happiness and on how to take the path to find the answers to your questions. Then you›ll see how life and your outlook will become completely restructured.
- George: I promise you I›ll do that, though I feel that there are certain parts of what you've said which I do not understand.
- Adam: My words are clear: focus on your major issues in a simple and deep way. When you do that you›ll find happiness stemming from your soul, and that will solve all your problems.
- George: Maybe...Thank you…I›ve tired you out. I›ll leave for work now, and today I also have an appointment with the doctor.
- Adam: Try to deal with Katrina and Tom naturally because you›ll leave for India soon, and when you return you can cross any bridge when you come to it. Make

sure you take things simply and without any complexities, happily and without depression.

- George: I›ll try, Adam, but you know it›s not always that easy.

(4)

George went to Dr. Tom’s clinic for his appointment in the evening, and the moment he entered he was met with Brad’s sharp looks...

- Brad: Where did you escape to yesterday?
- George: I didn’t, I had work to do.
- Brad: Why didn’t you wait for me?
- George: I hate drugs and I hate escaping from my problems.
- Brad: Hmm...Very well! And did you face your problems?
- George: I have an appointment with Tom. Is he here or did he leave?
- Brad (Snickering): No, he is here. I’m sure that you’ll need that pill of happiness and one day you’ll ask me to give you one. Please go in, he is waiting for you. He is looking forward to meeting Katrina’s husband!

George went into Tom’s office and found him sulky and tired. Tom greeted George and offered him tea, then apologized to George because he had stayed up late the night before and so he was a little tired... George expressed surprise at Tom’s words because doctors usually warn their patients against staying up late. Tom, however, directly changed the course of the conversation, feigning indifference, and then looked at George and asked him the following, while expecting that he had not found the answer:

- Tom: Did you find the answer to the first questions?
- George: Yes and no.
- Tom: How? Explain what you mean?
- George: I have an answer of which I’m very convinced, but it’s not complete.
- Tom: Tell me then, where can we get the rest of the answer?
- George: The answer lies in making the questions simple, and when that is the case, the answers will immediately and easily become apparent.
- Tom: The philosophical method is mainly based on complicating things, and not simplifying them, in order to show our intelligence and our depth of understanding.
- George: But simplicity is deeper, and if the questions are answered in depth,

wouldn’t that be better?!

- Tom: I think that you’ve started to philosophize the subject...
- Then he said in a tone of defiance:
- Simplify the questions as much as you like, but from where can we find the answers to these questions?
- George: I looked at all the beings that exist, and found that they could never originate from inanimate objects or from animals... So what remains?
- Tom (Laughing): People!

George looked deep into Tom’s eyes and said firmly ...

- George: True, people…or from their Lord and Creator.
- Tom: I don’t believe in the existence of a god!
- George: How do creatures come into existence then?!
- Tom: I don’t like to bother myself with such questions. Let’s say by coincidence. Let’s say they created themselves. Whatever!
- George: This is escaping from the questions, which is not the approach of philosophers! All the possibilities you’ve mentioned are illogical; because things can’t create brains for themselves, and coincidence can’t be so precise. I don’t have anything else to say... Then he rose from his chair and continued: I’ll follow your method and see where it takes us. We shouldn’t pull the reins of the questions just to reach some facts, when we’re not convinced of basic principles we used.
- Tom: You didn›t answer my question....Where can we find the answer to these questions?
- George: From the Creator of people, because He is the One who knows them best.

Tom was silent for a long time, then raised his head and said:

- Tom: I like what you have just said, though I disagree with you, and so I shan’t argue with you, but I’ll rather continue asking questions and ask you some questions that will prove that what you’ve said is wrong. Let’s assume that you are right in what you’ve said, would the people’s Lord who brought us into existence be Buddha, the sun, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or what exactly? People’s gods vary and change! How can we know the true God from among all these gods? Don’t you know that there are very many religions?!
- George: Yes, more than 10,000 religions, and Christianity alone is a religion which contains 33,830 different sects.

- Tom: I'm having a rich discussion with a cultured person! I'll take it that your answer is correct, so let's continue then: how can you guarantee that any answer is correct?
- George: Simply because it is easy, facile and uncomplicated. It should bring us happiness and shouldn't collide with reason or logic, be in conflict with science or contradict itself, and it should cover all aspects of our lives.
- Tom: A simple, deep and true answer... It means that any answer, even if it sounds correct but doesn't bring us happiness, or contradicts the mind and logic, or is complicated, or is not suitable for the life of the human, is an answer that we should render as unacceptable!
- George: Yes...of course!
- Tom: Fantastic! If such an answer exists I am with you. Then he smiled and said: I'll ask you other questions that will prove to you the correctness of our answer and method, or its incorrectness. He thought for a while and then said: Though I agree with you that pro-atheism evidence and the evidence of those supporting the denial of God are very frail, I still think that there is no god....Anyway, we'll travel down an unknown road which could take us to anywhere, and my question to you is: Who is the god from whom we'll find the answer? And according to the path of which religion?
- George: To simplify the matter: there are two groups, or two sets of religions and ideas: heavenly revealed religions and manmade ones. Which one are you asking about?
- Tom: True. Religions are many and we must make the matter more specific so that it becomes simpler for us. I didn't think about that. You're the one traveling to India, so let's alter the question to: Which religions are best: manmade or heavenly? And we'll go deep into the details according to your answer to that question in our appointment two weeks from now. I think that you'll observe in the religions in India what will take you to the point where you will be the same like me with regards to atheism and the abandonment of all of these religions.
- George: Traveling to India! How do you know about that?

Tom stammered and stuttered, trying to find a way out, but he could not!

- Tom: Errr…Katrina told me....She told me when I saw her by chance in church.
- George: Strange that an atheist who denies the Lord and God goes to church!
- Tom: I went to church to study the natures and characters of the religious, and not

to worship a god.

- George: Hmm, and how did you find Katrina's character?
- Tom: A very pious and smart lady! The lure of the East is clear in her thinking, soul and features.
- George: You seem to admire her?!
- Tom: The fact is that I admire her piety and certainty. I congratulate you. She loves you very much…
- George: An atheist admires religiosity?! Isn't that odd?!
- Tom: Perhaps! Then he tried to change the subject: Don't you have enough Indian beauty, but you want to travel to India?
- George: I don't understand?
- Tom: I see, Katrina's beauty isn't enough for you, so you go looking for pleasure with the beautiful Indian ladies, flirting with them?!
- George: No way! Forget about that…I'm going to get acquainted with other religions and approaches, and to sign business contracts. Goodbye. We'll meet then in two weeks.
- Tom: Ok, and I'm sure that you'll abandon all religions as soon as you approach them. I wish you enjoy India and I hope that it is beneficial for you.

(5)

Katrina received George. When she noticed his arrival she rushed towards him, welcoming him. But he responded to her coldly and with an unpleased tone of voice, so she tried to show him extra love and attention.

- Katrina: I was worried about you. Where were you yesterday, you didn't sleep at home?!
- George: You came back home at a very late hour last night, why should you care if I'd spent the night at home or out?
- Katrina: Yes, we were late yesterday in the church. It was a very important and fascinating ceremony.
- George: Fascinating because he was there of course.
- Katrina: Who do you mean?
- George: That person you were with at the ceremony?
- Katrina: There were many people there.
- George: Who from those I know?

- Katrina: George, am I being interrogated here?!! Anyway, I'll answer you: reverend Morris, Sally Peter, Hillary Simpson...
- George:…Handsome Tom!
- Katrina: Yes! Dr. Tom was there too. He came to increase his faith and belief in the Lord. He attended the entire mass with us!
- George: Terrific! An atheist attending a mass! Or was he there to enjoy the drinking and dancing that go on in these evenings?!
- Katrina: You are insulting me and the church! What do you mean?!Who told you that he attended the evening, I mean the mass?
- George: No, I›m neither insulting you nor the church! He is the one who told me that he enjoyed the evening with charming Katrina, and he who wants to increase his faith is the one who urged me that during my travels I must enjoy the beauty of Indian women and flirt with them!
- Katrina: What? He said that?!
- George: Yes, what is so strange about that?
- Katrina: Nothing! But...
- George: Look, I›m tired and I want to sleep. I›m going to bed if you don›t mind.

In the morning, George went to work early, where he found Kach waiting for him...

- Kach: Tell me the good news. What's your final decision, George?
- George: I'll be traveling to India at the end of the week if we conclude the business agreements between us before then, and I've arranged everything.
- Kach: Wonderful! We need to have a meeting together so that we can get to know all the details of the necessary contracts, and details of the people's characters there.
- George: I'll be with you in an hour to start an interrupted three-hour meeting, and also we can meet later.

Kach was very keen to clearly explain the details of the financial gains that could be accrued from the agreement with the Indian companies. He was, therefore, keen to clarify the character of all the people with whom George would deal. Kach did not neglect to mention any detail to George, however small.

- Kach: Do you still have any questions?
- George: No, things seem clear, by and large, although I believe that alliances based on principles that are financially, morally and ethically profitable for both

partners are stronger and firmer in the long term.

- Kach: The biggest gain here is to take as much as you can for the lowest cost....
- Then he smiled, and said:
- I'll take the financial gains, and you can take the moral and ethical ones.
- George: Alright!!
- Kach: I forgot to tell you about the surprise.
- George: What surprise?!
- Kach: Didn't I tell you that I had a surprise for you that would make you forget your questions, and your doctor too?
- George: What is it?
- Kach: Try some Indian pleasure.
- George: What pleasure do you mean?
- Kach: How insensible you are sometimes! Try some Indian ladies. They'll give you the answers to all your questions. Michael, the director of the recruitment firm I told you about, will arrange everything.... Then he snickered and said: Didn't I tell you that he was a very pious Christian?

George wondered inside himself: "Why are Tom and Kach so similar? Is it because of their materialistic, atheistic nature, or is this the truth that I'm escaping from? Ah! How confusing the truth is!! But I'm determined to get to that truth!"

- George: It's settled then; I'm leaving on Wednesday morning. Do you want anything else?
- Kach: I wish you a happy trip, profitable contracts, financially not ethically, and entertaining women!!Goodbye.

George often observed the greed and materialistic thinking of Kach, his boss, especially in the recent meetings with him in which they discussed George's trip to India. Kach directed George to identify the outlets for selling programs in India, and to focus on finding cheap recruitment techniques. India is a large market due to its large population, and the cheap labor is one of the advantages of its market. George listened silently and didn't wish to comment on Kach's words, because it was clear that Kach didn't care about anything in life except money and sex, and all his conversations revolved around those two points.

Kach had told him that Michael, the director of the Indian Global Recruitment Company, would meet him at the airport, and he warned him against

Michael's devoutness, then he added:

- Kach: We do not care what he is as long as he affords us through his contracts the opportunity to carry out exchanges and alterations.... And then with a chuckle he continued: This is a smart form of religiosity! He who gives me more profit and pleasure, I'm ready to worship and serve him!

They stood to leave. Kach winked at George and told him that his last advice to him was not to miss enjoying the rare Indian beauty. George interrupted him, absent-mindedly:

- George: What beauty do you mean?
- Kach: Indian beauty and belly dancing!

George stretched his lips in resentment, greeted Kach and left immediately.

George returned home tired, and unexpectedly found Katrina waiting for him. She didn't stay out late as usual... She met him affectionately and with a smile....

- Katrina: My love you are late! I've been waiting for you for two hours?!
- George: I had lengthy meetings with Kach about the trip.
- Katrina: Oh incidentally, I forgot! You didn't tell me how the appointment with Dr. Tom went yesterday?
- George: I gave him the waiter's answers, as I'm convinced that they are the true answers, and he was convinced of that too.
- Katrina: Fantastic! The important thing now is that you are on the right road.
- George: And then of course he gave me new questions!
- Katrina: What new questions?
- George: To decide which is the best religion to study to find the answers, and who is the god and creator from whom we'll get the answers.
- Katrina: The answer is clear: God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. These three are one who created humans, and those who don't believe in that are infidels.... Then she started to laugh hysterically.
- George: He advised me to look at different religions while I'm in India and to evaluate them. Then I must first define for him which is the best type of religion: heavenly or manmade?
- Katrina: Travel to India and you'll see unexpected wonders there, because it is the land of wonders, and then I'm sure you'll return convinced of what I've just said.
- George: What about Tom's advice about enjoying Indian women?!

Katrina tried to hide her uneasiness….

- Katrina: Don't listen to him darling.
- George: Do you mistrust me?!

Katrina smiled, and then found a chance to change the subject.. She lifted her head and looked at George..

- Katrina: I originally come from India but I haven't seen India in twenty years. Will you bring me a gift from there?
- George: Gladly.... What do you want?
- Katrina: I want a handmade Indian cross.
- George: The best Indian cross will be yours when I return, but I have a simple request.
- Katrina: What is it?
- I want this to be my best night with you.... Come, let's go to the bedroom.

India- The Land of Wonders

4

India- The Land of Wonders

India - The Land of Wonders

(1)

At the airport, after George had finished his passports and entry process, he found Michael waiting for him. He was able to identify him from a picture that was sent to him by email. Michael welcomed George warmly and asked him whether he would like to go to the hotel, or for a quick tour of the city?

- George: No, thank you. Take me to the hotel. I'm tired after travelling and feel a bit jet lagged because of the change of time. We can take the tour tomorrow morning, before going to the office.

George noted Michael's manner, his elegance and politeness to a degree that was close to affectation. As he went along with Michael, he noticed his luxurious car which revealed that he belonged to the wealthy section of the country, which was stricken with poverty.

The next day, at exactly seven in the morning, George left his room feeling fresh after resting enough the day before. When he reached the hotel lounge he found Michael waiting for him. He had the same impression of him as the day before. Michael was a picture of striking elegance. George greeted him and they walked together to the car.

- Michael: What do you think of taking a one-hour tour? We'll be in the office at about half past eight.
- George: Sure, I'd love to see India.

The whole time Michael was explaining the history and introducing George to the buildings and churches, he was boasting that India is a country that goes back deep in the past. George noticed how Michael avoided talking about certain large buildings, despite being questioned about them. Michael also avoided talking about the idols of Buddha that were all over the country. George asked Michael about them more than once, but he evaded answering him, as if he wanted to portray India as being only a Christian country. But George was contented to just look around and he did not comment, remembering that Kach had told him that Michael was a fanatic Catholic.

At eight thirty, George and Michael arrived at the office. They worked until eleven, discussing details about business, projects and contracts. As soon as Michael felt at ease with George, he raised his head and said to him:

- Michael: You're a Christian like me. So why should we allow that Jew, Kach, to tamper with the contracts of all the employees?! What do you think about tampering with only the contracts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, and laying down a condition that the contracts for Christians should be better! I don't want that Jew to rob us.
- George: So it's fair then to rob the Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims?!

Michael was silent with embarrassment... They returned to the work they were doing until one o'clock, when George asked to take a break because he was again feeling really strained.

On their way to the hotel, they took the same route that they had come with. When George saw a large building, he deliberately asked Michael again:

- George: Who built this magnificent building?
- Michael: Muslims...extorters!
- George: And what is that?
- Michael: A stupid Buddhist temple where they worship stones and humans like us!!

Since George felt Michael's discomfort with the questions, he felt it better to be quiet and only listen for the rest of the way...

(2)

Michael agreed with George that he would pick him up at four to go for dinner. He said that he would throw him a simple welcoming party. Four o' clock arrived, so George went downstairs to the parking lot and jumped in Michael's car. It took him by surprise when Michael suddenly said:

- Michael: There are some things that Kach normally asks from us when he arrives, but I haven't seen you asking for any of them yet!
- George: What are they?
- Michael: I'll tell you about them at the restaurant. I think you'll enjoy the surprise!

They arrived at the Taj Indian Restaurant. It was a luxurious and ancient place in every way. George was impressed by the beauty of the place and its

splendor, because it was in the traditional style, and was fragrant with the smell of Indian incense which he liked, though he usually did not like incense. Michael smiled at him and told him that his special suite would been nicer.

In his VIP suite, George saw two gorgeous Indian girls who were approximately twenty years olds looking and smiling at him. He shook hands with them and smiled back. Michael winked at George, lightly patted him on his shoulder, and said:

- Michael: What do you think of the surprise?
- George: Very impressive.
- Michael: Whenever Kach comes to this place for dinner, he takes one or both of these girls to his hotel room to spend an enjoyable night with them.

Looks of resentment appeared on George's face, and he coldly replied:

- George: The only wonderful surprise for me is the beauty of this place.
- Michael: Strange, don't you like the girls?!
- George: They are really very beautiful, but you are meant to be surprising me! I'm not Kach!
- Michael: What do you mean?
- George: Do you think that what Kach does is a good thing, and that I therefore must be and do like him?!
- Michael: Kach doesn't sign a contract except in this way!
- George: So are you bribing me then to sign the contracts!
- Michael: Sorry. It's just the norm, what do you want then?
- George: I'm a married man, and I wouldn't betray my wife. Isn't that what Christianity teaches us, Michael?!
- Michael: Yes...Yes!

The waiter came with the food menu and presented it to Michael. He spoke to him in Hindi and he left, taking the two girls with him. Michael turned to George, faking a smile:

- Michael: Should I order for you, or would you like to do that yourself?
- George: No, rather you order for me, because you know more than me about the food here.

George wanted to change the atmosphere of the meal that had become tense. He remembered Katrina who had repeatedly asked him to bring her a cross from India which would remind her of the Christian victory over the barbarian

Muslims there, then the separation of Pakistan and Bangladesh from India. He said to Michael:

- George: You should know best where to find specially crafted crosses. Would you tell me where I can buy one for my wife?
- Michael: I'll have a beautiful cross delivered to your hotel room… Then he quickly added: And I'll tell you how much it costs because it's not a bribe!
- George: You know, even though I'm a Protestant Christian, I don't know that much about Christianity. From what I believe, you are a devout Christian; can you convince me of my religion?
- Michael: Christianity is a divine religion revealed by God, not like earthly religions written by humans.
- George: Which religions do you mean?
- Michael: Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, etc…In India there are hundreds of such religions.

George recollected his discussion with Adam. He found in himself the desire to continue to ask Michael questions to see how he regards religions and explains their existence.

- George: And what makes you sure that Christianity, or any other religion, is heavenly revealed or manmade?
- Michael: This is proven by history, recurrent reports and testimonies. Even if you ask a Hindu, he will tell you that Christianity is a divinely revealed religion and that it was later developed by humans
- George: I think that simplicity requires that heavenly religions are truer than man-made ones.
- Michael: Simplicity is a beautiful word. Yes, they are truer. Is there any doubt about that?!
- George: This is what all Christians say, but I simply want to make sure of that myself, and see it with my own eyes.

After a long day filled with events and discussions, George went back to his hotel room. The moment he lay on his bed he started recollecting what had happened during the day. He found himself echoing the words of Adam: "Make sure you take things simply and without complexity, happily and without depression."

- He put on the TV and found that it was showing a program in Hindi with English subtitles about Hinduism and its wonderful moral teachings. The program emphasized that Hinduism is a mixture of the Aryan religion, which focuses on the reverence of natural forces, and the religion of the ancient Indians, which concentrated mostly on the things that they loved. After a period of time this set up evolved and some sort of merger took place, and because they were afraid that privileges of some classes would be lost, they started to scribe some opinions on these issues. Such ideas were later called the Vida. This is the greatest Hindu scripture, and the name means law or wisdom. They started scribing such laws or provisions which were intended to give the Aryan class or the pure race special advantages that the lower or impure classes didn't have. Of course they started to record these laws which gave the minority successive privileges, as the laws increased and grew in number, so learning them by heart became difficult. So they said: "These laws should be recorded." They went on recording them for ten centuries –that is 1000 years - and the writing of this book which is considered holy by Indians continued until it was sealed by a decision of the Hindu Priests' Supreme Council, who said at the time that nothing more would be add to it. And if that had not happened, additions to this book would have continued. It is a gigantic book with a large number of volumes. George's attention was drawn by a report in the program which indicated that Hinduism is a religion only suitable for those who are in India; The Hindus decided at a conference of their scholars that this is a religion made particularly for Indians, and when a Hindu leaves India, he becomes a non-Hindu. George laughed sarcastically at this strange religion which is fanatic even towards a place, but he then checked to himself and said: "In any case, these are human matters, they are not divine. It is that simple...just that simple! It is as though I'm beginning to see what I've been looking for. In all cases, this is not enough..."

(3)

At eight o'clock the next morning Michael was on schedule, waiting for George in the lobby. He smiled when he saw George approaching him. He greeted him with a firm tone, and then said:

- Michael: We have a long day of work ahead, just like yesterday. Are you ready?
- George: Of course, that's what I came for.

On their way, George saw a strange statue that did not resemble a Buddha

statue. He tilted his head staring at it. Michael said to him laughing:

- Michael: What's wrong? This is one of the gods. Didn't I tell you that man-made religions make new gods for themselves every day?
- George: I want to sit down with one of the followers of these religions.
- Michael (Laughing): Ha ha ha… Today we'll have dinner with the director of the company's operations department. She's a practicing Buddhist.

They arrived at the company and became immersed in work. Michael clearly saw how much George differed from Kach because he was interested in religion, and inquired a lot and always wanted to know more about it. He also had many principles that he respected, unlike Kach, who didn't care for anything except money and sex. When they finished their work at about two o'clock, Michael came closer to George and said to him in a quiet voice:

- Michael: Now that we're finished, I want to tell you something that I have been keeping to myself.
- George: Go ahead.
- Michael: You're nothing like Kach, although both of you are from the same company.
- George (Laughing): You mean the girls at the restaurant?
- Michael: This is only one thing, but there are many other differences.
- George: And in your opinion, what do you think is the reason for this difference?
- Michael: In one simple word…religion.
- George: And you; aren't you religious, but still you go along with Kach?
- Michael: Maybe, but what I'm doing is not necessarily right.

Then he stood up to leave, and then turned to George and said:

- Michael: Don't you want to meet Jyotsna?
- George: Who is she?
- Michael: She is the Buddhist operational director I mentioned earlier. Do you know the meaning of that name?
- George: No.
- Michael: It means the light of the moon. Then he smiled and said: She is now almost sixty years old, so she is not a bribe, ha ha!
- George: Of course, I'd like to meet her. Is it possible for her to dine with me at the hotel at four?
- Michael: It should be okay. And after the interview you'll realize the blessing of

being a Christian.

When George came down from his room for dinner, he found an elderly woman waiting for him. She had a mixture of Indian and Chinese features, or at least this is how he perceived her. He approached and greeted her:

- George: Hello, Miss Jyotsna.
- Jyotsna: Hello, nice to meet you.

He invited her to have lunch with him in an open buffet in the hotel restaurant. She thanked him. It was clear that she was a very respectable and decent woman.

George chose to sit at a side table, and welcomed her again:

- George: Michael told me a lot about you.
- Jyotsna: And you as well, Michael told me a lot about you. He also told me that you asked me to have lunch with you because you wanted to know about Buddhism!
- George: Yes, that’s true.
- Jyotsna: Before we talk about that, there’s something that struck me about you, and it seems that all the employees are talking about in the company.
- George: What is that?
- Jyotsna: You aren’t like Kach.
- George: How do they know?
- Jyotsna: The news has spread that you refused to differentiate between Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims in tampering with the contracts, and that you refused the two girls, and so on!
- George: Do they like that?
- Jyotsna: At least for me as a Buddhist, yes, very much!
- George: I understand about not tampering with the contracts, but what about betrayal?
- Jyotsna: We Buddhists hate betrayal and desires. We believe that vices are attributed to three things: the first of which is surrendering to pleasures and desires, as one of Buddha’s commandments says: “Do not deliberately kill any living creatures. Do not steal nor rape. Do not lie. Do not take any intoxicants. Do not commit adultery. Do not eat food that is prematurely cooked. Do not dance nor attend a dance or a singing party. Do not frequently visit a doctor. Do not buy a luxurious bed, and do not take gold or silver”.

- George: Wonderful commandments. But I have some questions, if you would allow me? Why mustn't you visit a doctor, or take gold or silver? Why mustn't you buy a luxurious bed?! Is it a form of socialism?
- Jyotsna: Renunciation of the life of this world is the most important characteristic of Buddhism, and this includes avoiding marriage and riches, and abandonment of the self and other matters, such as those you've just heard. The life of this world is the mother of all evils.
- George: I'm surprised that the most important characteristics of Buddhism is not to live and be happy in this world. The nature of human beings inclines towards the love of money and also towards the opposite sex...Who is Buddha?
- Jyotsna: But I told you the life of this world is the mother of all evils, while renunciation of the life of this world is the mother of all good. As for the answer to your question about Buddha: "Who is Buddha?" This is a difficult question to answer!
- George: How could the answer to who Buddha is be difficult? Isn't he your god, messenger or savior, and to him you associate yourself?
- Jyotsna: You've just pointed out half the difficulty. We don't agree as to whether he is a messenger, saviour, god, son of god, a teacher or other than that.
- George: Really?!
- Jyotsna: North China differs from the south, and differs from Burma and Ceylon in determining this matter. In any case, this is not important. What is important is to elevate yourself spiritually to be a Buddhist.
- George: Elevating the soul by avoiding marriage and money, and by putting up with shoddy clothing?!
- Jyotsna: Yes, and not to steal, lie, get drunk, nor kill.

While talking to Jyotsna, George's eyes were attracted to the elegant, expensive clothes she was wearing. So he deliberately asked her, while staring at her clothes:

- George: Do committed Buddhists follow that?
- Jyotsna: Yes... Then she smiled and said: To some extent. Conditions of life don't allow us to live these wise commandments.
- George: So these are only moral commandments and aren't suitable for real life, for most people?!
- Jyotsna: Yes, to a certain extent too... Even you people are like that.
- George: What do you mean?

- Jyotsna: Frankly speaking, Michael is very religious, yet he brings the girls to Kach every time he comes for a visit, and also tampers with the contracts! I know many Christians who drink alcohol. Don’t these mistakes exist?
- George: True, but what is important to me is to focus on the religion itself.
- Jyotsna: For me, there is no big difference between the different religions, and I think that we are all similar to each other with regards to that.

She wiped her mouth with the napkin as she had finished eating. George called the waiter and ordered her some Indian desert. Then he continued talking:

- George: You don’t agree about who is your god or messenger and so on... but do you agree about the laws, rules and commandments?
- Jyotsna: We develop these commandments over periods of time, and according to each territory....
- George: Develop!!
- Jyotsna: Yes, Buddhism is a religion that evolves over time because it is of our own making and not divine, as you claim Christianity is, though some of us say that it has a heavenly origin - which is something I doubt.
- George: May I ask you a simple direct though awkward question?
- Jyotsna: Okay, we Buddhists love simplicity.
- George: Do you think that heavenly revealed religions are better or manmade ones?

Jyotsna thought for a while and fell silent for a moment, then lifted her head, sighed and said:

- Jyotsna: I have to say, so as not to lie, that...there is no doubt that if the religion is heavenly then it is better. This is in principle, but many of the followers of heavenly religions are some of the worst of people... Then smiling she said: Take the example of Kach, the Jew, and to a lesser extent Michael, the Christian who tampers with people’s money and robs them.
- George: True…true. But why don’t you convert to a heavenly religion and be good?
- Jyotsna: I was born from a Buddhist father and mother, and for that reason I am a Buddhist. But who knows!! Maybe I’ll be a Jew, a Muslim or a Christian in my next life.
- George: After death?!

- Jyotsna: Yes. My soul will be transferred to someone else after my death, and I am now sixty years old.
- George: Do you believe in reincarnation?
- Jyotsna: No, but it is in our religion.

Fatigue was clear on Jyotsna as a result of the discussion, and listening and replying, especially as the meeting was straight after work, and she expressed her wish to excuse herself and end the meeting because she was physically tired and couldn't stay any longer.

- Jyotsna: Are there any other questions or anything I can do for you?
- George: No thank you, you've really been very helpful and I've learned a lot from you.

He wished her a good day and she left.

Michael contacted George at the end of the day, telling him that he would find the cross he requested at the reception office. He added with a little sarcasm: It is registered on the hotel bill so that you don't think that it is a bribe!

George thanked him and laughed with him, without feeling any embarrassment at all.

- Michael: Tell me, do you now know the bliss of being a Christian after meeting Jyotsna?!
- George: Almost.
- Michael: If the meeting had been longer you'd have heard wonders that would have really disturbed you. Did she tell you about their fancies and philosophies?
- George: Fancies! No, she didn't.
- Michael (Laughing): It's better like that, otherwise you wouldn't have returned to us in India again. Although I expect that what you did hear was enough for you to know that Christianity is better.
- George: You mean all the heavenly revealed religions?
- Michael: Yes, that's what I believe. Goodbye, my friend.

George spent the night in the hotel room browsing sites on the internet and watching TV until he felt drowsy. He lay on the bed. It was a tiring day for him. It wasn't physically tiring, but his head was heavy with thoughts about the tasks, responsibilities and details of work, in addition to his personal questions which were the biggest reason for his coming to India. In the midst of it all, Adam's advice was never absent from his thoughts: "Make sure you take

things simply." He soon felt a great relief because today a great part of the floundering of manmade religions, and also how they were distant from what is suitable for humans, became evident to him, which is what he was now certain of. How could human beings like us tell us about the reason we were created?!

(4)

The next morning George went to the largest computer shop in New Delhi. He took the elevator to the fifth floor, to Motee's office. He was the owner of the largest retail chain store in India for selling computers and software.

George found the office to be very traditional, but luxurious and simple at the same time, and the smell of Indian incense filled the place. He went in and asked the receptionist the directions to Motee's office. He replied:

- Receptionist: Sheikh Motee? On the right side; the last door on the right, and there you will find his secretary.

George walked to the location of the office, repeating to himself in surprise: "Sheikh Motee!! Sheikh! What does that mean?!"

He greeted the secretary who was working on a computer, then introduced himself, gave him his card, and told him about his appointment with Motee.

- Secretary: Please enter. The Sheikh has been waiting for you for five minutes.

George looked at his watch and found that it was in fact pointing to eight thirty five. George entered the office, which was unorganized despite being luxurious. The moment he entered his office, Motee stood to greet him. He thanked him for his kindness and they began to discuss work.

- George: Is it possible for you to explain to me the prospects of the possible alliance between us?
- Motee: Yes. Simply anything which may bring any profit to both your company and mine.

George felt very reassured by Motee's profound simplicity. He shook hands with him while laughing:

- George: Agreed; this is the fastest agreement in history. But we must know what it is that will bring us this profit.
- Motee: I think that my brother Karimul Allah knows more about these details than me. You can discuss them with him. He is not here now, though. You can meet him at nine tomorrow morning, and you can lay down the details of our agree-

ment together... Then he added:

- Motee: Did you take a tour of New Delhi and its suburbs? If not, it's our duty towards you as a guest to arrange this tour for you.
- George: I took a short tour for about an hour and a half.
- Motee: Then you haven't seen anything important yet. India is a very ancient country. Would you allow us to have you as our guest?
- George: Gladly.
- Motee: So please, then let's go.
- George: Where to?
- Motee: We'll take a tour beginning with a visit to the world famous Taj Mahal.

George went down with Motee to find his luxurious car with his driver waiting. Motee rode in the back, next to George.

- Motee: The road to the Taj Mahal will take about an hour and a half, because the roads are not crowded at this time of day, luckily. The journey itself is an enjoyable one. As for the Taj Mahal, it is an architectural wonder of the world. I won't spoil it by describing it to you, as you'll soon see it for yourself.
- George: Who built it?
- Motee: King Shah Jahan. It's a model of Islamic architecture in India.
- George: Islamic ?!
- Motee: Yes.
- George: Sorry, but aren't Muslims extorters of the territory of India, and savages and barbarians?!

Motee smiled and said:

- Motee: Yes...Yes…we plundered India, killed its people and looted its riches!
- George: Oh sorry. Are you a Muslim?
- Motee: Yes, and I thought you knew.
- George: I apologize for my question, but this is what we hear in the West about Muslims.
- Motee: Never mind. Neither did I nor any other Muslim come from outside India to steal its resources... I'm a native Indian, the son of an Indian, who is a son of an Indian. If you want to know who stole from India, just note when you reach the Taj Mahal who actually cut the gems from it?
- George: Who?
- Motee: Ask the tour guide when we get there...I hope that won't bother you. I

know the rumors about Muslims and I don't care to respond. I think that reading a brief history of India would show you what I mean.

- George: How?
- Motee: Just write the word "India" in any search engine on the internet, and you will know who occupied India and plundered it, and you will also know whether Muslims are its indigenous population, or they arrived from abroad. Note how other communities lived under the Muslim rule... Then he added laughing: Although there are many mistakes that were committed under the Muslim rule, including the Taj Mahal which we are on our way to visit now; It was built as a mausoleum for Shah Jahan's wife.
- George: You're talking in a very simple way!
- Motee: Simplicity in looking at life is one of the labels of happiness and satisfaction.

George really enjoyed the trip. He was surprised to know that the looting of the jewels from the museum happened at the time of the British occupation, but Motee did not tell him this as he did not wish to hurt the feelings of his guest. George loved the purity of Motee's smile and also his character, yet he noticed one thing about hi: Motee left him three times during the trip, saying to him: "Wait for me; I'll pray and then come back." Also all of Motee's actions were clearly disorganized and impulsive.

The tour that Motee took George on ended, and George arrived at the hotel at 8 o' clock in the evening, exhausted. He took a warm bath and went to lie on the bed. But the moment he lay on his bed, he thought of phoning Michael to consult him about the nature of the agreement with Motee.

- George: Hello, I just have a quick work related question: it seems that dealing with Motee is easy. Is this a deceptive type of easiness?
- Michael: Though I don't feel at ease with Motee, still he seems honest to me. But he is untidy in his business, and if he organized himself he would produce much better results.
- George: But Kach used to tell me that he is a complicated and difficult person, though I found him in fact the opposite.
- Michael: Yes, he is complicated in his religion, but large-hearted and simple in his approach and dealings. Then he laughed and added: He is complicated in that he doesn't obey Kach with regards to his desires and girls. For that reason, they don't

agree with each other, despite the many meetings they've had together. Do you now know why a religious man like me brings beautiful girls to Kach!?

- George: Tomorrow I'll sit with him to make the agreement. Do you have any advice for me?
- Michael: No, nothing.. I don't have any other information. May the Holy Spirit protect you. Do you want me to give you a lift or take you on a tour tomorrow?
- George: Thank you. If I need something I'll call you.
- Michael: Goodbye.

(5)

In the morning, while George was having his breakfast in the hotel's restaurant, he spoke to the waiter, who spoke broken English.

- George: What's your name?
- Waiter: Kapoor
- George: It's said that India is the country of religions. What is your religion?
- Kapoor: I'm Hindu.
- George: Wonderful. An ethical religion.
- Kapoor: Yes, it is.
- George: Is it true that your clerics believe that this religion is only fit for those who live in India, and that is why he is called a Hindu?
- Kapoor: Yes, we made this religion fit only for Indians.
- George: You made the religion!!
- Kapoor: Yes, we made it to suit us!
- George: Who is your god that you worship?
- Kapoor: We have the largest number of gods, compared to the other doctrines of the world. We have a very large number of gods. We may need volumes to write down the names of all our gods. Durant Wall, the author of The Story of Civilization said: "Writing the names of Hindu gods may fill up one hundred volumes."
- George: Very strange!
- Kapoor: We worship some celestial bodies and take them as gods, like the sun. We give some gods the characteristics of angels, and some others the characteristics of demons.
- George: A demon-like god!
- Kapoor: Some amulets are gods, some birds are gods and some animals are gods.

- George: An animal who is a god!
- Kapoor: The elephant, for example, is the god called Ganesha. He is the embodiment of the human-animal nature. The deadly snake that kills with one bite is the god Naga. We offer these snakes milk and almonds, and hold celebrations to worship them.
- George: And how do you worship all these gods?!
- Kapoor: It was because of the large number of gods that we combined them into three, or one god with three divine persons.
- George: One in three divine persons... like Christianity?!
- Kapoor: It is possible that we took this from the Christians, since we develop our religion ourselves. Or maybe you are the ones who took that concept from us.
- George: Mmm, go on...
- Kapoor: What is important is that the three gods, or the God with the three divine persons, are: Brahma, the god of creation, Vishnu who protects the world, and Shiva who is the god of destruction, annihilation and damnation.
- George: This is a religion of wonders! But you haven't said anything about the cow?! I've heard that you...
- Kapoor (Laughing): I'll say as Gandhi says: "Cows are our god, and we love them more than our mothers. My mother feeds me milk for a year or two and I serve her throughout my life, while the cow feeds me milk for a lifetime and does not require from me except its food. When my mother dies, I pay for her funeral and burial, but when the cow dies we benefit from all of it, even its bones."
- George: Does that worship of yours take you to paradise after death?
- Kapoor: We have no paradise, nor do we have hell.
- George: So how is the good person rewarded and the wrongdoer punished? Or are they both alike?
- Kapoor: The good person is rewarded after his death in that his soul is transferred into another good man's body, and it might unite with the god Brahma on the journey that takes on away from the cycle of rebirth. As for the wrongdoer, his soul is damned by being transferred into the body of an evil person.
- George: And do you differentiate in this worldly life between the obedient pious person and the wrongdoer?
- Kapoor: Yes, because some of us have our share of divinity.
- George: And how is that possible?

- Kapoor: Brahma the god of creation created every sect from a different part of his body. He created the Brahmins from his head. This is why they are the intelligentsia and the wise. He created the Kshatriyas from his arm and for that reason they are the people of power, strength protection and the army. Brahma created the Vaishyas from his thigh, so in the community they are the ones who work in trade, industry and who supply the food. And he created the Shudras from his feet, and these are the servants and slaves who have to serve the others. Their worship lies in their service of the previous three classes. As for the untouchables, they aren't included in these four divisions or in the Hinduism structure.
- George: So if I am a Shudra, is it possible for me to climb up to become a Brahmin, or if I am an untouchable, is it possible for me to enter into Hinduism?
- Kapoor: Impossible! The Shudras' act of worship is to provide services to the other classes, and the untouchables are entirely out of our structure.

George was speechless and he felt disgusted because of the atrocities of this religion. He, nevertheless, feigned a smile at Kapoor as he left, and took out some change and gave it to him. He got up to meet Karimul Allah in fear of being late for his appointment with him.

On his way, he recollected Michael's words to him when he told him about the evils of manmade religions and that if he sat with Jyotsna for longer, he would hate India as a whole, and would never want to come back to it ever again. It is true. How much these religions are contrary to the mind and instinct! But is this the case for manmade religions only, or are all religions the same, as Dr. Tom had told him: "You'll return from India renouncing all religions"? There is Michael, the religious man, who is as unreligious as Kach, and there is Motee who is not better than them in his chaotic manner of life! George was sure that the true religion could never be contradictory with either the mind, instinct, nor logic. He wondered to himself if such a religion really exists?

(6)

George arrived at exactly 9 o' clock in the morning at the office of Motee's secretary, and he asked him if he could meet Karimul Allah. The secretary told him that Karimul Allah was waiting for him in the Sheikh's office. When George entered, he found the two brothers- Motee and Karimul Allah- talking. Both of them stood and welcomed him. George felt depressed and uneasy when

his eyes fell on Karimul Allah's face, though he did not know why!

- Karimul Allah: Please come to my office. I'm ready for the drafting of the agreement.

Motee interrupted:

- Motee: After you finish, I would like to see you George before you leave.
- George: And me too. I would like very much to say goodbye before I leave.

George accompanied Karimul Allah to his spacious and simple office.

- Karimul Allah: My brother told you that we would agree to any contract that might bring profit to both parties.
- George: Yes... you look like someone...!
- Karimul Allah: Who? Osama bin Laden?! Ha ha ha! You're not the first to tell me that!
- George: Well, I certainly hope you aren't like him.
- Karimul Allah: I'm a Muslim like him, but I'm an Indian and he is an Arab.
- George: I mean you're not a terrorist killer like him.
- George: Let's not get into that please! He is a terrorist because he isn't liked by you and because his actions don't comply with your interests.
- George: How can we like him? Don't he and his followers blow up trains, buildings and facilities in our countries?!
- Karimul Allah: Well, some of your presidents have killed double the number of people bin Laden has killed, yet you don't call them terrorists. Western nations have killed scores of people in the countries they have occupied, yet you don't see them as terrorists! Then he smiled and said: When bin Laden was fighting your enemy, the Russians, he was a hero, not a terrorist! Let's move to the work, please.

George felt a gap growing between him and Karimul Allah, so he decided not to open any dialogues other than work with him. He wanted to just end the work requirements with him, as soon as he could. He told himself that perhaps Tom was telling him the truth after all, because there were these Muslims defending the greatest terrorist in history!

- George: Good, this is not the subject we came here to discuss.
- Karimul Allah: Do you have a proposed draft of the agreement, or would you like that I give you our draft?
- George: I have a draft, but give me yours to read too, please.

- Karimul Allah: Here you are.
- George: Thank you. Give me a minute to go over it.

George began to read the draft. He noted that the articles were simple, easy and to some extent all-inclusive, and were better than he had tiresomely written in his draft, but it allowed a lot of freedom for their company. He turned to Karimul Allah, who was busy reading a book, and said:

- George: I find it very appropriate and wonderful. I just have one simple observation.
- Karimul Allah: Please, tell me what it is.
- George: Don't you see that it gives unreasonable freedom to your company, and there is a delay in the payment to us?!
- Karimul Allah: Then, there are two observations: there is freedom; so that I can work in a wider area, and also since we, unfortunately, are not so well organized, the delayed payments are because we do not want to lie in our agreement with you.
- George: You don't want to lie! How?
- Karimul Allah: By promising you something and then breaking the promise! If I don't have freedom in my work, I'll have to resort to making repeated apologies using false and flimsy reasons for not being able to complete everything, which is something I don't want to do and neither do you! The other thing is that these conditions make your sales turnover larger and you'll therefore make more profit, and you'll also have a full payment bank guarantee in the contract.
- George: Is it possible to advance the monthly payments by three months?
- Karimul Allah: Alright agreed! I want to be flexible with you so that Kach doesn't have to come next time.
- George: Why don't you want Kach to come?
- Karimul Allah: Forgive me if I don't answer that question. I don't want to burden you.
- George: You won't burden me, please tell me why?
- Karimul Allah: He only thinks of profit in a very crude way that makes both parties, him and us, lose in the end. I think that principles can make all parties profit. He also repeatedly refers to sexual insinuations that we can't accept. Sorry, but we Easterners are more conservative.
- George: Don't worry, I quite agree with you on much of what you said. It's a deal!

I'm waiting for the authentication of the contract from the British Embassy, and when I return to England I'll authorize it from the Indian Embassy there.

- Karimul Allah: Thank you; and I apologize for what I said about your boss.
- George: Don't you worry! I would like to say goodbye to Motee'-ul-Rahman before I leave.
- Karimul Allah: Fine, please, let's go.

George and Karimul Allah went to Motee's office. He greeted George warmly, and then asked him:

- Motee: Have you finalized the agreement?
- George: Yes.
- Motee: Was it as easy and simple as I had told you?
- George: Very simple.
- Motee: Everything which is simple is successful and all complexities are against the mind, natural disposition and religion... Then he added: Since you've finalized the contract and finished the work, is there anything in India that you'd like to see? We'll gladly take you there. Tourism in India, the country of wonders, is beautiful!
- George: Thank you, but I'd like to return to the hotel early today. I have some work to do on the internet.
- Motee: As you wish. Then he opened a drawer and pulled out two packs of excellent Indian incense, and said: This is a gift from me to you. He put it in an expensive looking bag, and said to him: The driver is waiting to take you to your hotel.
- George: This is rare eastern generosity! Thank you very much! Then, taking the bag, he bid the two Indians farewell.

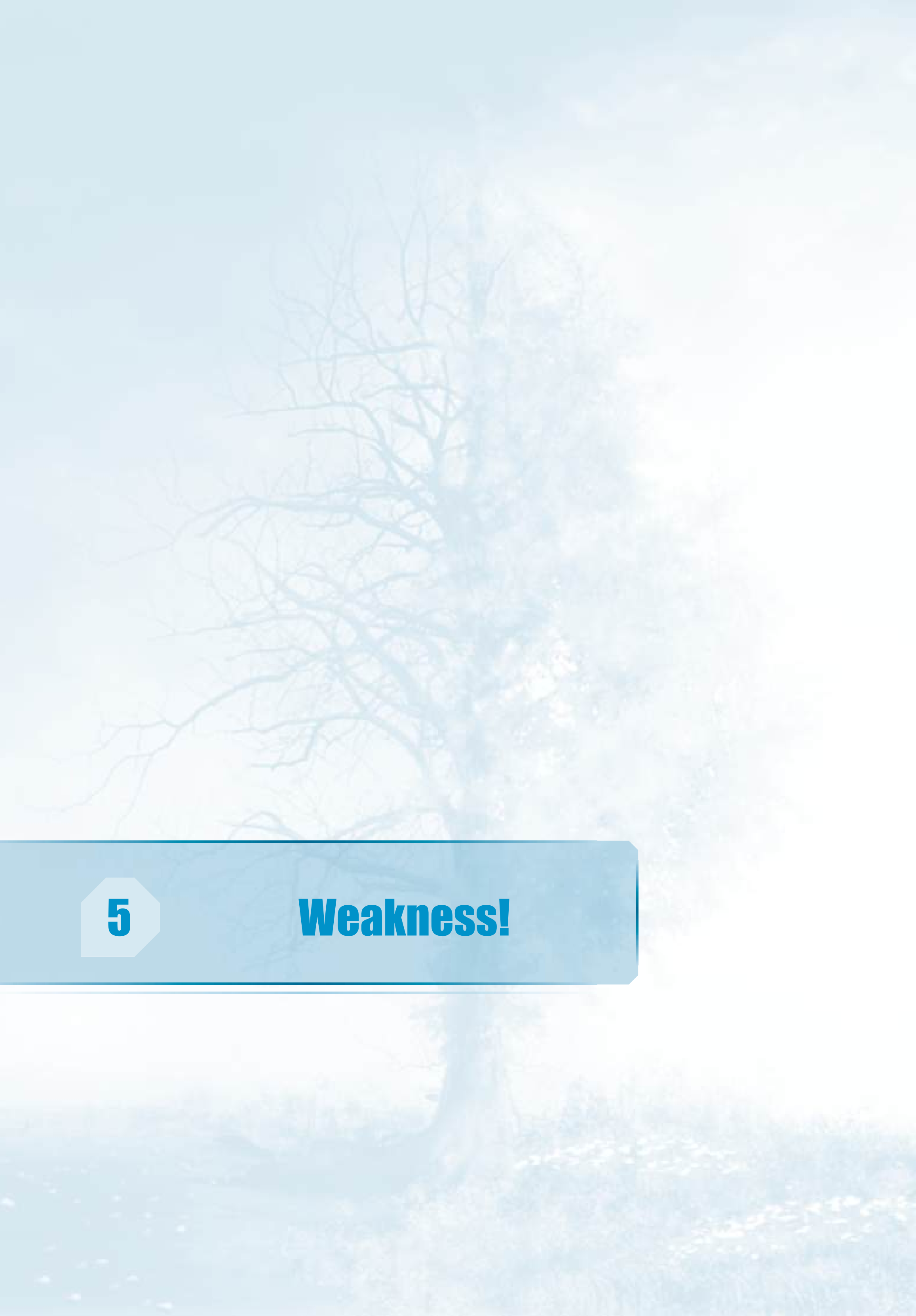
(7)

George found the driver waiting for him. The moment the driver saw him, he came up to him and led him to the car. He opened the door saying:

- Driver: Please be seated, sir.
- George: Thank you very much. What's your name?
- Driver: Steven.
- George: Oh! A Western name!
- Steven: I am a Christian, so my name is similar to Western names.
- George: For how many years has Christianity been in India?

- Steven: Many years.
- George: Did colonization and missionary convoys play a role in that?
- Steven: Without a doubt, otherwise Muslims would have invaded India.
- George: Muslims! You mean they would have invaded India with their terrorism?
- Steven: No, you don't understand the absurdity of earthly religions. These are trivial and funny religions! If there weren't missionary campaigns, people would have converted to Islam spontaneously.
- George: I've got to know about some of these earthly religions, but heavenly religions are not much different from them!
- Steven: Strange! How could you be a Christian and you say that? This is what atheists say!
- George: I hate atheism and see that it is contradictory. But I still think that heavenly religions are not very different from earthly religions.
- Steven: As for us Christians, we want to save mankind from its misery and we emphasize the importance of being pure, serene and moral, and I don't accept any accusation against Christianity in any way - implying they are like the misguided earthly religions. And I don't accept such accusations from Motee'-ul-Rahman who is a Muslim, even though I'm his driver, although he has never said anything like that, so how about if it came from a fellow Christian?! But perhaps because you're a Protestant! But I still don't accept it!
- George: I didn't mean to accuse Christianity of being similar to earthly religions! How could I when I'm a Christian!? What I mean is that in its practices, Christianity is similar to earthly religions. It is also suffering from the same confusion and dilemmas that some earthly religions suffer from.
- Steven: I don't understand!
- George: Is it possible to change the subject, and take advantage of what remains of our drive to tell me something about the history of India?
- Steven: We'll soon be at your hotel. Anyway, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India were one country, then Pakistan separated from India.
- George: Why did they separate?
- Steven: Because of the injustice that Muslims saw and had suffered from the Hindus. The other thing is that they were lured out of India; otherwise India would have become an Islamic state.
- George: You defend Muslims much, though you aren't one of them! Is that because you work with them or because you're afraid of them?
- Steven (Laughing): Maybe!

Weakness!



5

Weakness!

Weakness!

(1)

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when George arrived at the hotel. He decided to go up to his room to take a quick bath, change his clothes, and then go down to the hotel restaurant for dinner. As he was about to leave his room, his phone rang. It was Katrina...

- George: Hello...how are you darling?
- Katrina: How is everything going, George? How is the land of wonders?
- George: Wonderful, and I'm very happy here. I have completed my work, and I have two days left for me to learn more about this beautiful city.
- Katrina: Perfect! What about the doctor's questions?
- George: (Laughing) Ha ha ha … Sometimes I feel that Tom is right when he said that if I came nearer to religions I would abandon all of them, and I think things have started to become clearer to me to some extent.
- Katrina: The closer you get to Catholicism the more satisfaction you'll find in it, and the Holy Spirit will bring you bliss.
- George: Don't you be so sure of that. Michael, the devout Christian, is the one who brought me some young Indian ladies for pleasure. All of them are the same; Michael, Kach or Tom. I no longer believe any of them.
- Katrina: The existence of a bad example doesn›t mean that the original idea is wrong - rather it may be proof that it›s not wrong; because if there›s one bad example, you›re sure to find dozens of good examples!
- George: Very true. Tell me, how are our dear kids, Michael and Sally?
- Katrina: They›re okay. We are all looking forward to seeing you very soon.
- George: And I also miss you all, and am looking forward to seeing you soon too.

In the hotel's restaurant, dinner was an open buffet with all types of savory and delicious food. The restaurant was crowded with tourists from around the world. George sat at a small side table having his dinner alone. His eyes fell on a gorgeous Indian lady who seemed to be in her early twenties. She had thick

black hair, kohl-lined eyes, and bright smiling lips. She was looking at the tourists, who kept looking at her. Sometimes they exchanged smiles, and sometimes they were reluctant to overstep any limits and to flirt.

He did not know why he felt attracted to her beauty and her dalliance. He repeatedly looked at her, but then he decided that he would keep himself busy with his food and thinking about the work that he must do on the Internet instead. Yet suddenly he found that young beauty was sitting at his table.

- The Girl: My name is Urmila. I am from Delhi and the meaning of my name is gorgeous or charming...I felt sorry for you when I saw you looking at me while you were sitting all by yourself. Can I soothe you from your solitude?

George lifted his head and looked at here. She was almost naked. Her stomach fully exposed and she wore a very short skirt that barely covered anything. Her face was as beautiful as the moon, her hair was silky and wavy, and she had a bright smile. He did not know why he felt so happy when she chose him and came to sit at his table, instead of anybody else's …

- George: My name is George and I'm British. Thank you for caring. Then he was silent, struggling with himself in an attempt to settle his internal conflict. He wished that he could be with her, but it was evident that sitting with her would result in other matters. He said: Sorry but I'm very busy, and actually this is the first time since my arrival that I'm sitting alone.
- Urmila: Your modesty, clothes and features are really attractive. Would you like to have some fun together?
- George: And your gentleness is beautiful and I'm enjoying talking with you now, but I have something I have to do in a little while.
- Urmila: Sorry....you seem to be naive and unlearned! I have an AIDS-free certificate.

She stretched out her hand, put it on his and pressed it hard. He felt as if electricity flowed to his heart. But he struggled with his core and his self, and pulled his hand quietly back.

- George: I understand... thank you, but I'm married.
- Urmila: Is your wife with you here in India?!
- George: No, she's back in Britain.
- Urmila: Most of those who come from Europe and America, no matter what faith

they may have, are married. But they love life and have fun here.... Indian charm is different.

- George: Thank you...you are really charming, but no thank you!
- Urmila: You're strange and complex. This is the first time in my life that I've met someone like you, and the first time that I've offered myself to a man and he rejected me!

Urmila immediately stood up and left. George murmured to himself: "Very strange... I'm complex because I won't betray my wife and respect my principles! (Laughing) Maybe.... Everyday this life shows us wonders that we can't explain, or perhaps we can but in our own way. If Kach were in my place, he would have enjoyed a glamorous night with this beautiful woman!!

(2)

After George finished his dinner, he looked at his watch. It was half past four India time - which was eleven in the morning London time. He remembered that Katrina had called him four hours earlier - which was at seven in the morning. It was not usual for Katrina to wake up so early, he thought!

He went up to his room and finished some accounting work on his calculator, and then opened his e-mail and his Facebook profile. He sent a message to Kach mentioning the good news that he had signed the contracts with the two companies. Then he browsed the incoming messages and checked his Facebook page, which he hadn't seen for the last three days. He found a large number of new articles, images and links from his friends, and a friend request sent to him from Dr. Tom. He added him then opened his profile. He found that Dr. Tom had added a new collection of photos, which he opened to find to his surprise that they were photos of Dr. Tom together with Katrina! George found that there were photos of both of them, eating and laughing together. Tom had written underneath "with Katrina". George checked the date it was added and found that it was six o'clock London time. The timing that was written on some pictures was 5:25, with the same date of that day, 15/7...

He was perplexed! That meant that Katrina was with Tom until five thirty in the morning, and they had not slept yet! Blood boiled in his veins. He picked up his phone and called Katrina, but her phone was switched off. He called Tom,

who replied to him with a tired voice:

- Tom: Hello George. Katrina told me that you began abandoning all religions!
- George: When did she tell you that?!
- Tom: When she called you we were together, and then I dropped her at your house. I congratulate you. She›s wonderful!
- George: What were you two doing together?
- Tom: We were at the church ceremony. Didn›t I tell you that I am conducting research on the religious!

George ended the call, and threw himself on the bed wondering at Tom's insolence... He was not aware of himself except when he was standing in the hotel's lobby searching for the girl Urmila, but he did not find her. He asked the receptionist about her. He smiled and told him that many men were asking for her that day, and that she had just gone up to the room of the Chinese tourists.

George asked him impulsively and naively:

- George: What are they doing?!
- Receptionist (Laughing): Ha ha ha.. How should I know?

George felt embarrassed by the question, and realized that he was very tense, and not aware of what he was doing. He went up to his room and all he wanted at that moment was to take revenge in any way on Katrina for betraying him. He decided to call Michael to bring him the two beautiful young ladies he had seen in the restaurant. He said to himself: "Damn your principles! Why can't you be like Kach or Tom?! What did these principles offer you? Nothing...nothing!!"

- George: Hello.... hello Michael!
- Michael: Hello George! Is everything alright?! It isn't usual for you to call me at this time.

George realized that it was after working hours. He looked at his watch. It was seven thirty!

- George: Sorry, I didn't realize the time. I just wanted to make sure you were okay. Maybe I'll call you tomorrow. Thanks Michael.
- Michael: Thanks for being so kind. I'll call you tomorrow.

George continued walking up and down his room with displeasure and anger, sometimes murmuring insults and curses. He did not know what to do since

the suspicion and bewilderment about his wife weakened his character. He wished to take revenge on her with Urmila, but she was nowhere to be found. Someone else was undoubtedly enjoying himself with her at that time; someone who was less fanatic than he and more flexible with those principles that make one retreat, only to find that others come and get all the fun and beauty instead.

At that moment he remembered when Katrina had stayed out late with Tom before. He went on the net and searched on Tom's Facebook profile for old photos and found that Tom had uploaded photos of that evening too, and that the images almost resemble the pictures of the last party, which gave an indication that it happened at the same place, which perhaps was the church. He said to himself: "What church is that that allows such nonsense?!"

Then he remembered how he had dealt with the occurrence of the other evening, and how Brad had almost made an addict out of him. And he remembered Adam's words: "If your main questions are resolved then you'd be able to deal with your problems in a better way, and you yourself would be stronger in dealing with any pressure." And he had said: "Don't make your suspicion of her be the evidence that convicts her. She may have been with Tom calling him to Christianity!" And also he had said: "Focus on your major issues so that your soul and life may find the answer to these questions in a simple and deep way. Then you'll find happiness, and then all your problems will be solved." Moreover, he had said: "Try to deal with Katrina and Tom naturally, for you'll soon leave to India, and when you return you can cross that bridge when you come to it. Make sure that you take things simply without any complexities, happily and without depression."

He wondered to himself: "Did Adam and Katrina plan this together, or is he defending her because she is religious like him? I'll call him to see what this man is hiding from me!!"

- Adam: Hello…. hello, who is it?
- George: It's George from India.
- Adam: Hello, Western man calling from the East! How are you?
- George: I feel terrible! Katrina stayed up the whole night until this morning with Tom.
- Adam: And how are you sure of that?
- George: From Tom himself. He has put the photos on his Facebook profile. You

can login and see them for yourself!

- Adam: What else? You’re sure she stayed up with him late last time?
- George: Yes, but ...
- Adam: The important thing is what will you do? Don’t weaken in front of doubt and confusion. Focus on your goals of the trip, whether they are your goals at work or your goals to answer the questions.
- George: I want to take revenge on Katrina in any way.
- Adam: I’ve already told you. Don’t make anyone manipulate you while you’re in a period of weakness and confusion. I repeat, when we’re weak we’re also weak in sticking to our principles, and the more we stick to our principles the stronger we become.
- George: I think I’ll have fun with an Indian lady or maybe with two, and then I’ll send her photos to burn her heart as she has burned mine.
- Adam: You’re only burning yourself by taking revenge in this way because it’s the act of the weak, and you’ll hurt yourself and your principles more than you’ll cause Katrina any harm. Suppose – and this may not be true – that she has betrayed you with Tom; who is the one who’ll be most affected by that, you or she?
- George: Me!
- Adam: No, she’s the one who’s betrayed her principles, religion, reputation and herself. You won’t be harmed by anything, although I still think that the case isn’t as you suspect.
- George: Why are you defending her? Is it because she is religious like you?!
- Adam: I don’t think she is religious, even if she appears to be, if she is cheating on you as you say. But if she isn’t cheating on you, then it is another story. The other thing is why should I defend her when I don’t know her, and have never even met her? I didn’t know she’s religious except from what you told me now. You only told me that she drinks wine and stays out late, and didn’t mention that she’s religious. Plus, why would that interest me? You’re the one who asked me, and it wasn’t me who called you!
- George: Sorry Adam, I didn’t mean to make you angry. The thing is that I’m so tired and I decided to take revenge on Katrina with Urmila.
- Adam: I know you didn’t mean to offend me, but pressures shouldn’t shift us away from our principles. Now who is Urmila?

- George: A gorgeous Indian beauty who offered herself to me today, and I refused. How I wish now that I was able to find her.
- Adam: And why did you refuse her?
- George: Because I didn›t want to contradict my principles for a whim, desire or lust...or maybe because I›m a stupid idiot!
- Adam: And now you›re willing to contradict your principles?!
- George: What should I do?
- Adam: Return to your principles, and search for the answers to your major questions. Continue on the path to happiness - and you›ll reach it, leaving the troubles you are suffering from far behind you.
- George: I›m returning to London in two days and I have to meet you then.
- Adam: I›ll be waiting for you. Just contact me after you›ve arrived.

George hung up and didn't know what to do; he turned on his computer and thought of opening Adam's profile on Facebook. He found it to be a very ordinary page, with relatively long articles. He wasn't in the mood to read such long articles. Then his attention was drawn to an article entitled: "Lessons from my friend who is searching for happiness" written 4 days earlier.

"Lessons from my friend who is searching for happiness":

I recently came to know a person who has great principles and is eagerly searching for happiness. I think he is sincere in his search, but he is under great pressure. I have learned from him and his story, and I want to share with you the following useful points:

1. Whoever wants happiness, he should take the path that leads to it. One can't reach it with money, position or inherited wealth. In order to reach happiness one should exert all his effort and be determined to reach his goal.

2. He is never happy and can never be happy, the one who can't answer the major questions of life: Who created us? Why were we created? Why are we alive? What is our final destination? He who isn't able to resolve these answers will never reach happiness.

3. Some people make the path to happiness complicated and difficult. Then they say: "We can't overcome these difficulties." If they simplified things for themselves and made it easier, they would be able to arrive there smoothly and easily.

4. Some people forget their major goals when faced by insignificant problems

and small short-term goals. They then fall in the middle of the path and never reach happiness.

5. It isn't right and we shouldn't during the course of the path step over our principles, for they are beacons that shouldn't be stepped over. He who seeks to step over his principles will himself be smashed, but the beacons will still remain unchanged.

6. Once the seeker is sincere with himself, exerts all his effort and is patient and determined, matters will be facilitated for him that will show him the path.

There're still other great lessons that I'll try to continue with in an upcoming article, maybe soon.

My best regards,

Adam.

(3)

While George was in deep thoughts about Adam's article that he had just read, he wondered in puzzlement: "Why did Adam write about me and didn't tell me, and why didn't he mention my name? There is no contradiction between what Adam wrote and what he says to me. Rather, he's clear and decisive. But he doesn't care about my feelings, and my psychological state! If I took some heroin, or found Urmila, I'd forget everything! Forgetting is the path to happiness.... Ah! Is it true that these are methods to escape from reality, or are they true solutions used by sensible people who don't waste opportunities? I'm really at a loss!"

The hotel phone rang. He picked up the handset and it was the receptionist telling him that Urmila had returned...

- Receptionist: Do you want me to send her up?

George was silent for a long while and did not know what to say...

- George: I don't know!
- Receptionist: What did you say!?
- George: I'm coming down to her now.

He went down to the lobby, talking to himself: "Is going down to Urmila a type of revenge I'm taking against Katrina, or revenge against myself as Adam says? Should I listen to Kach and Tom, or to Adam?"

While he was deep in his thoughts, the elevator stopped at the lobby. The

door opened and there was the sweet seductress, Urmila, standing in front of him! The moment she saw him, she smiled widely and her face shone. It was even more beautiful.

- George: Hello Urmila! Would you like to sit with me there on that seat?
- Urmila (Laughing): Okay.

Once seated, Urmila said with a smile:

- How happy I felt when the receptionist told me that you had asked about me and wanted me.
- George: And why is that?
- Urmila: Because I felt offended when you rejected me earlier, and I felt that you didn’t think I was beautiful and gorgeous.
- George: I didn’t offend you, I thanked you and I didn’t say that you weren’t beautiful. I think that you are gorgeous, just as your name says.
- Urmila: Why don’t we sit in your room to have fun together, then?! She winked at him.
- George: I want to talk first.
- Urmila: About what?
- George: Can I ask you some simple questions that mean a lot to me? And I want you to be very honest with me.
- Urmila: Okay, and I’ll be very honest with you! I don’t know why you attract me so much.
- George: Are you happy in your life?

There was a moment of silence in which Urmila looked at the floor.

- Urmila: I promised you that I would be honest and I’ll not break my promise, even though I didn’t expect such a question! If the happiness you mean is smiling, laughing, having wealth and beauty, then yes, I’m very, very happy!
- George: No, I mean inside you…in your soul…do you feel happy? Some people laugh and inside they are filled with sadness and gloom.
- Urmila: It’s like you’re describing me exactly. I escape from facing the grief and misery inside me with money, laughing, enjoyment and sex.
- George: And what is the cause of this grief and sadness, though you have beauty, money, health and even pleasure?
- Urmila: I don›t know! Maybe it›s the absurd life that I live! My life has no mean-

ing at all!

- George: Are you looking for the meaning of your life? Or is that a matter that doesn›t interest you?
- Urmila: No, but I am not good enough to find the answer. Finding the meaning of life leads to true happiness, and I don›t deserve to be truly happiness!
- George: Why don›t you deserve it?
- Urmila: I›m just a nice toy for the tourist to play with, and I play with them for a passing moment of pleasure.
- George: And why did you feel happy when you knew that I, in particular, was looking for you?
- Urmila: Only because I failed in my game with you! I›m not used to losing at all.
- George: Do you know why I was looking for you?
- Urmila: No! Then she smiled and said:
- Don’t tell me that you were looking for me to ask me this question?!
- George: No, not for that. It is because I’m suspicious that my wife is cheating on me with another man, and I wanted to take revenge on her by pleasing myself with you.
- Urmila (Laughing): Didn’t I tell you that I’m just a toy. You’re taking revenge against your wife by having a malicious moment of pleasure with me! Am I despicable to that extent?!
- George: No … sorry, you are very gorgeous, but my principles prevented me from doing anything that contradicts my ethical and moral conduct.
- Urmila: And now, for the love of revenge, you forget your principles! How cheap I am in the eyes of the people!?
- George: Forgive me, I didn’t mean to offend you, but this is what you’re doing.
- Urmila: True! Sometimes one doesn›t realize who one is. It›s been just over two years now that I›ve been doing this kind of work, and I›ve never been rejected by anyone, ever. How beautiful I feel in their eyes, and how cheap I feel in their words and behavior when we›re done and I prepare myself to go! This is the first time anyone has told me so bluntly what you›ve just said, and has made me face myself!
- George: Sorry... I repeat that I don›t mean to offend you or hurt your feelings.
- Urmila: Maybe… but this is the truth!

- George: What do you mean?
- Urmila: Sometimes we escape from ourselves and are too afraid to see what we really are!
- George: I don›t understand!

George reached out and grabbed Urmila’s hand and tried to pull it towards him, but she withdrew her hand gently and tears came to her eyes. She said:

- Urmila: Absurdity and escaping from life is misery, however courageous it seems.
- George: Forget it please, and I apologize to you for what I’ve said.
- Urmila (Laughing): Ha ha ha.. You are giving up your principles to take revenge on your wife?! Am I absurd to that extent?!
- George: What do you want? You mean you refuse to go up to my room with me so we can enjoy each other and escape from our grief and our troubles?!
- Urmila: Yes, this time I’m the one who refuses!
- George: What religion do you follow?
- Urmila: I have no religion! Does a person who truly believes in religion do what I do?
- George: My wife is religious and I think she is cheating on me with another man!
- Urmila: It is either that your suspicion is misplaced, or that she is lying and hypocritical, and isn’t religious at all - or that she believes in a distorted and wrong religion! How can you possibly presume that I believe in a god that can see me and punish me, and yet I still sit waiting to catch men?! By the way, my father and mother are Buddhists, but I left Buddhism, which is a loathsome contradictory and prejudiced religion, and I became irreligious.
- George: How can you speak so lowly of your parent’s religion?
- Urmila: It’s our religion which we add to and modify as we wish. So if you want, you can consider atheism as a modern modification of Buddhism! Actually, many modern fads and fashions are amendments to ancient religions. Creativity, even evil creativity, has no limits... I’ll leave the hotel and may never return here again.
- George: Why won’t you return here?
- Urmila: I won’t return until I find a reason that gives meaning to my life and makes me respect myself. Thanks again.
- George: Where’re you going?

Urmila stood up and left, and did not answer his question.

(4)

George woke up late to the phone ringing; it was Michael on the other side. George answered in an exhausted and gruff voice...

- Michael: Are you still asleep? What's wrong? You sleep and wake up late? Are you turning into one like Kach?
- George: Don't worry about that! I've a day and a half left in India; what would you recommend I do?
- Michael: There are a lot of parks, churches, houses of worship, museums, markets... What do you want to do?
- George: Go to the churches and houses of worship.
- Michael: Don't forget to visit the Church of St. James. It's the most famous and most beautiful church here!
- George: And what else? Are there places of worship for Muslims, Hindus and others?
- Michael: Even though I don't like it, yes; there is the Delhi Grand Mosque which took six years to build, and it's a wonderful piece of architecture.
- George: Thank you, I'll have my breakfast and go to visit these two landmarks.
- Michael: Before you finish your breakfast I'll be at the hotel.
- George: Don't bother, I'll take a taxi.
- Michael: (Laughing): This isn't a bribe. We've already signed the contracts! I'll be there in half an hour. Bye for now.

Once George had finished his breakfast, while trying to forget his wife's betrayal and his conversation with Urmila, which reminded him of his suspicion about Katrina, he received a call from Michael telling him that he was waiting for him in the lobby. He drank what was left of his tea, and went to meet Michael. He greeted him and they got into the car and headed to the church...

- George: I remembered you yesterday when I spoke with the Hindu worker in the restaurant.
- Michael: Why should a Hindu remind you of me?
- George (Laughing): I remembered what you had said about the Buddhist Jyotsna. That day you said to me: "If you had sat down with her for longer than that, you wouldn't have considered coming to India again!"

- Michael (Laughing): Ha ha ha… That's true…very true! These religions were made by man in periods of cultural and scientific backwardness. Each religion is tailored to solve a certain problem they have, or to give rights and property to a particular class. But looking at them in modern perspectives, these religions are failures, despite their modern versions. Forget about them and let me introduce you to St. James' Church, which we'll reach in a few minutes. It was built by James Skinner in 1836 and is one of the oldest churches in the region. It's built in a unique architectural style, and its churchyard is one of the most beautiful around.
- George: It is the oldest church in the area?!
- Michael: Yes, it was built approximately 200 to 300 years ago.
- George: And before that there weren't any Christians in India?!
- Michael: Christianity in India arrived through two routes: through Thomas the apostle in the Gospel of John, who is one of Christ's twelve apostles, in the first century AD, and the second way was through the Western campaigns between 1500 and 1975. Christianity is the third religion in India, after Hinduism and Islam. There are about 24 million Christians in India.
- George: That's all?! That's only a small percentage of the population!
- Michael: Yes, Christians make up 2.3% of the population. And because of this percentage, angry demonstrations have erupted against this so-called very great increase, since the Hindus feel that Christianity has been imposed on them from abroad through money.
- George: Is it appropriate to impose religion on people with money?
- Michael (Laughing): Ha ha ha… To some extent, to save people from worn out Hindu beliefs.

They arrived at the church and got out of the car to admire the beauty of its construction, images, statues and domes. Everything was genuinely beautiful. There was no indication at all that there were worshipers inside, it was just a historic landmark to be visited. Michael happily described everything to George until the end of the visit, and then they got back into the car. Michael asked George:

- Michael: What do you think?
- George: Really wonderful.

- Michael: Didn't I tell you that? Where shall we go now?
- George: We agreed to go to the Delhi Mosque.
- Michael: Okay, even though I don't like the place. But if you insist I can't say no.
- George: Why don't you like it?
- Michael: Muslims are brutal barbarians.
- George: How? Did they force people to embrace Islam?
- Michael: The fact is that they didn't force anyone to embrace their barbaric religion.
- George: Then they tempted people with money, like Christianity?!
- Michael: I understand what you're aiming at, but they didn't do that either.
- George: So how did people embrace this religion?
- Michael: Ah...people accepted this religion first from Arab traders, who came to trade in India.
- George: Then people accepted Islam because they loved it, not because they were forced to embrace it!
- Michael: Yes, unfortunately, this is true. It seems that it is easy to deceive and manipulate people; in order to escape from the abhorrent class system of the Hindus, people embraced Islam upon their first interaction with the Arab traders. Then they - that is the Muslims-came as conquerors, later on.
- George: Conquerors?!
- Michael: Yes. The first conquests came with someone called Mohammed ibn Al-Qassimal-Thaqafi, in about the year 700 AD.
- George: That is about one thousand five hundred years ago!
- Michael: They increased until it became the second religion in India.
- George: How many are they?
- Michael: More than 180 million people, which is equivalent to 14.5% of the population.
- George: A large proportion! This means that if Pakistan and Bangladesh hadn't broken away, India would have probably been mostly Muslims?!
- Michael: Yes, but they felt aggrieved by the Hindus and revolutions erupted, which ended by Pakistan breaking away from India. Then he smiled and said: But this is better for us! Muslims had ruled India from 1001 AD. Their rule lasted for

almost 300 years.

- George: Did they force people to embrace Islam during that period?
- Michael: No, but they ruled unjustly. They built huge luxury palaces from the toil of the poor who are weak.
- George: Motee ar-Rahman mentioned that to me when we visited the Taj Mahal!
- Michael: This shows how fair Motee is. They wronged people with regards to their wealth, though they didn’t force people where religion was concerned. Generally speaking, all the kingdoms that were in India were unjust, and where justice is concerned, most probably the fairest who ruled India were the Muslims. Their rule was brought down by the British with strange brutality, under the name of “The East India Company”. People revolted, Hindus and Muslims, against them.
- George: Which means that the Hindus loved the Islamic rule?
- Michael (Laughing): Ha ha ha … Unfortunately yes, because not all the Muslim rulers were unjust. Injustice occurred at the end of their era of rule. Also, Muslim rulers – though they were oppressive - were more just than the British East India Company... I hope that that doesn’t anger you.
- George: History is told as it is, not as we want!
- Michael: The revolution against Britain continued until they captured the Muslim king and killed his children, and they placed their heads on the dining table! Then they fought against Islam and abolished Islamic education, and looted the wealth of India.
- George: What brutality! Where were human rights?!
- Michael: We hear about human rights at conferences and meetings. The reality, however, is something else! Anyway, we are getting near to the mosque which used to be the headquarters where the rebels against the British met, and where their Muslim scholars announced their ruling of the necessity of Jihad, according to which people started moving after that… It’s called the Masjid- Jahan Nama, or the Jama Mosque. It took a long time to be built, and was completed in 1656 AD. The Mongolian emperor Shah Jahan gave orders for its construction, and it became one of the largest mosques in Asia; accommodating 25,000 worshipers.
- George: An ancient mosque, then!
- Michael: Perhaps. It was built according to the Mongolian style, with three domes. There it is. We›ve arrived.

They got out of the car and looked at the mosque, its beauty and construction. Michael showed signs of uneasiness and that he was struggling while entertaining George, who therefore hurried and finished his tour of the mosque in respect of Michael's feelings, as he was nice to him.

- Michael: Do you want to go somewhere else?
- George: No, thank you! I think it's getting late.
- Michael: But you are being unfair!
- George: Why?
- Michael: You visited a church and a mosque, but not a Hindu temple!
- George: I wanted to, but I thought that it would tire you.
- Michael: The temple is near the road we're taking. Would you like to see it?
- George: Of course, if that will not delay you from your work, as I'm leaving tomorrow and I'll spend most of the time preparing my luggage and won't be able to go out much.
- Michael: The name of the temple is Akshardham. It is visited every day by thousands of locals and international tourists. It's the largest Hindu temple in Delhi. Its construction began in 2000 and ended in 2005. It's a modern temple, but an architectural splendor, with their gods engraved on the walls.
- George: The animals and the other gods are engraved?
- Michael (Laughing): Ha ha ha… Yes, gods like animals and dancers are engraved. There are also 20,000 statues. Didn't I tell you that manmade religions are absurd?! It seems to me that every time they marvel over or like something, they make it a god! In any case, you're in the land of wonders where some worship rats and build temples where they are worshipped, and also snakes and serpents which have special temples too. Here we are… that's the Hindu temple.
- George: It seems to be a magnificently beautiful building.
- Michael: Indeed it is. It was built in pink sandstone and no steel or concrete was used in its construction. It's engraved with beautiful decoration. Let's go, we'd better hurry so we won't be late for the hotel.

George was impressed by the building, though he was disgusted by the large number of statues there. They took a quick tour of the temple, and on the way back George continued talking.

- George: It's a magnificent building, but as for the statues, there are too many of them. It is a shameful thing!

- Michael: Yes... you're right.
- George: The strange thing is that even in the church there are statues, but there aren't any in the mosque!
- Michael: But the statues in the church are of Jesus, and not of animals.
- George (Laughing): Ha ha ha.. Yes…yes, that's right. Anyway, thank you for today's wonderful tour.

In the midst of his tour, George forgot about Katrina and Tom for a little while. He felt calm and comfortable. It seemed to him that what Adam said to him was true: "Focus on your major issue". This tour was a step forward on the path to happiness for him. It became clear to him that manmade religions were not suitable to answer his questions, for how could they answer something which they lack in the first place?! They even modify and change themselves according to the circumstances in order to reach the level of religious stability they seek.

He thought he should send a message to Adam. He turned his laptop on and wrote:

"My friend Adam...I'm really grateful to you for your advice, and I apologize for talking to you in a bad way.

I can say truthfully that I have benefited a lot from your advice. I've moved beyond the desire of revenge that was controlling me to become focused on my major issue, and I am not being distracted by small details. I've insisted on that and tried to continue in this way the whole day. I can clearly answer your's and the doctor's question: manmade religions don't answer any questions. They are just opinions of humans who didn't create us, so how can they know why we were created? I repeat my thanks to you. I'm coming tomorrow and I'll be more than happy to meet you. Please accept my thanks again.

Your friend,
George.

Then he lay on his bed, happy with his day and that he had remained focused on the major issues.

(5)

George woke up early. He had a warm and refreshing bath and then checked the time. He said to himself: "There are four hours left before going to the airport. I'll see what I can do, but I'll have my breakfast first..."

While sitting at the breakfast table, he saw the Hindu waiter Kapoor who he had spoken to the day before. He called him...

- Kapoor: Hello, sir.
- George: Hello, I know I delayed you last time, but I have other questions to ask you, if that is alright with you?
- Kapoor: Okay. You seem to be interested in Hinduism... This is a new Western fashion.
- George: Hinduism is a fashion?!
- Kapoor: Yes, Hinduism and Buddhism are a fashion for you in Europe and America. They usually come to us to escape hateful materialism that has turned people into machines. They seek some spirituality and morality, but they don't know anything more than that about it.
- George: Good, that's clear. But I want to ask you a question: are you and other Hindus generally happy?
- Kapoor: Perhaps the Brahmins who exploit people are happy, although I don't think so. I am from the Shudra, that is the servants -this is according to the class system. As for the dogmas, we escape from our beliefs and multiple gods through spiritual and moral rituals that remove us from the world, and the god too. Haven't you heard about Gandhi?
- George: Yes, a wonderful personality.
- Kapoor: And a rebel too. He wanted to rebel against Hinduism, and was killed by fanatics for that.
- George: And why did he want to rebel against his religion?
- Kapoor: Because we can't live as equals and have complete faith at the same time. Excuse me, you might be - according to the fashion-an admirer of Hinduism, and I might have spoiled that for you.
- George: Why didn't you change your religion?
- Kapoor: I was born to Hindu parents… Then he smiled and said: I don't want to

rebel so as not to be another Gandhi.

- George: Will you accept this money as a gift from me, as I’ve taken much of your time?
- Kapoor: Thank you.
- He went up to his room and started packing and preparing his bags. While he was doing that the phone rang. It was Karimul Allah speaking....
- Karimul Allah: Hello, George, I’m Karimul Allah .
- George: Hello, Karimul Allah.
- Karimul Allah: I came yesterday to bid you farewell, but I didn’t find you. I left the contracts, which have been stamped by the British Embassy in India, at the reception desk, as we agreed. When are you leaving?
- George: Thanks a lot, I almost forget them. I’ll take them from the reception desk now. I’m leaving in two hours....
- Karimul Allah: Would you like me to give you a lift to the airport?
- George: No thanks. I›ve agreed for the hotel to bring a car for me.
- Karimul Allah: Don›t mention it. I›ll be waiting for an authorized copy of the contract from the Indian embassy in London, goodbye.

George hung up and then directly phoned the reception desk and asked to have them send the papers up to his room. He placed the handset down and thought:”Why is it that I never feel at ease when Karimul Allah is around, although he hasn’t done anything bad to me? Is it because he looks like bin Laden? Or because of his accuracy and proficiency when carrying out negotiations? Or because of how he spoke about my boss Kach? Or is it for another reason that I can’t perceive yet? A strange feeling! Maybe I can’t forget the train bombings in London, or maybe it’s the impact of the media! The thing is that I don’t feel at ease towards him, and I don’t know why...!”

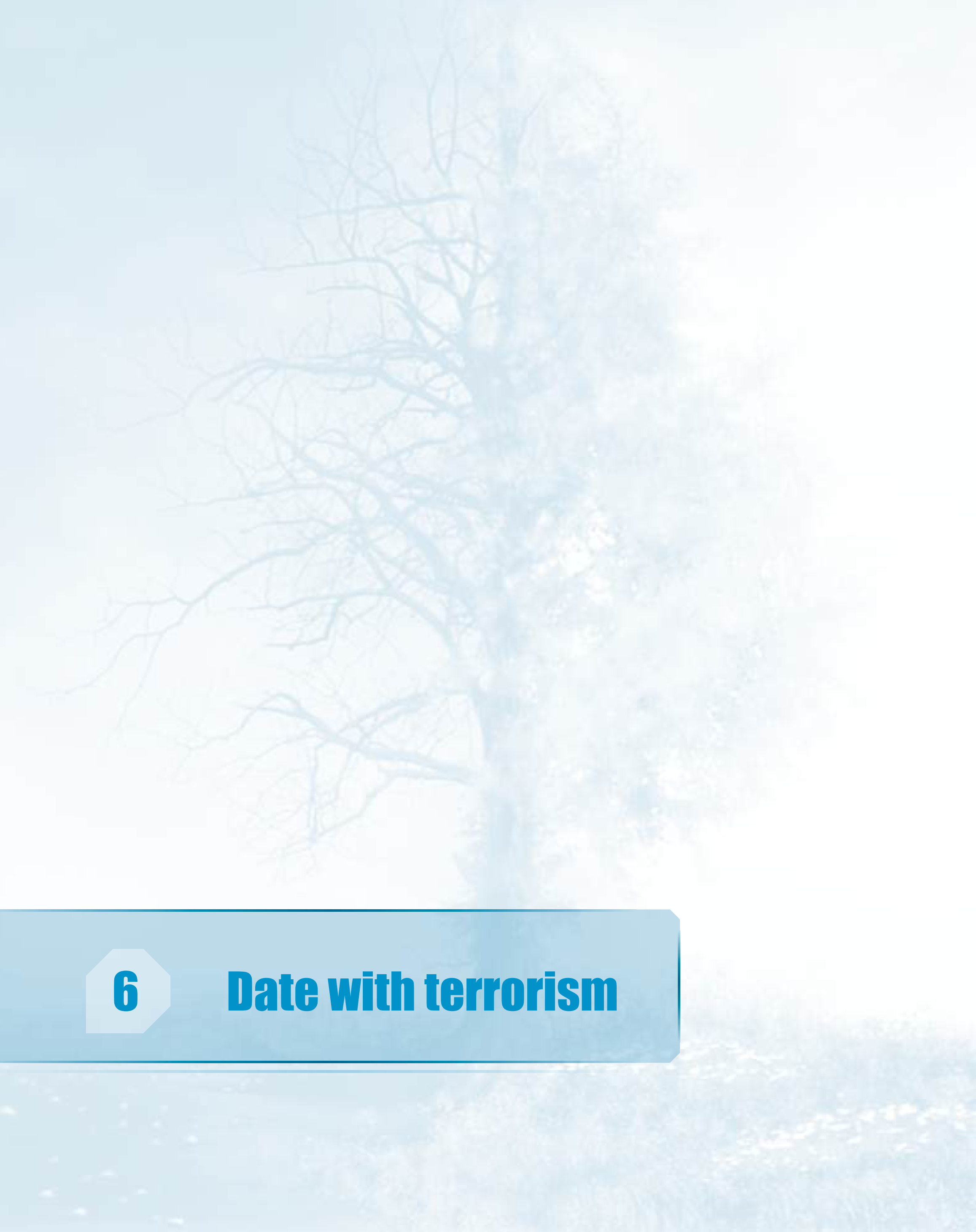
His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of the papers from the reception desk. He examined them and found them to be exactly as he wanted, so there was nothing left to do but stamp them at the Indian embassy in London. He looked at his watch; it was time for him to go to the airport.

He phoned the reception desk and asked them to start the checkout procedures, and to make the car available for him half an hour earlier, if possible, so as not to be faced with any surprises or traffic jams on the road.

He looked attentively at the streets of India from the window of the car en route to the airport. The road was full of statues, and he was talking to himself: "I can't worship or look for an answer to my questions from stones or humans. Thank you, India, for guiding me to the beginning of my path to happiness. It was an enjoyable trip, despite all that happened in it."

Weakness!

Date with terrorism



6

Date with terrorism

Date with terrorism

(1)

George returned from his trip to India. His voyage was amazing, but hectic and jam packed with information, conversations and questions. It wasn't his first business trip, but it was the first one to be so successful. It was the first time that he had finished his deals so quickly, and the first time the deals had such a powerful impact. India really is the land of wonders… He recalled the details of his trip when he was on the plane, and felt that he loved India and its people, although he hated its religions and fables very much. He wondered if he loved India because it answered some of his questions, or because it was his beloved Katrina's homeland? But then he wasn't sure about that, as Katrina had caused a wound in his heart that hadn't healed yet…

When the plane reached London, he fetched his bags and went to the arrival hall, and was surprised to find Katrina and his kids in the airport. All the way home he was very happy and kept laughing with his family.

- Katrina: You didn't tell us what you thought of India, honey?
- George: India is a great country, and the people there are amazing.
- Katrina: Your eyes are beautiful, that's why you see beauty in everything.
- George: Really, I enjoyed this trip so much; it was one of the best trips of my life.
- Katrina: Great, so what did you like so much about it?
- George: Everything was just perfect, but the odd thing is that I can't really specify what I liked most about the trip, maybe because the people were amazing and kind, or maybe you are the reason darling, or maybe because I managed to finish many deals quickly and efficiently. But what matters is that I was so happy there.

George turned to his son Michael, and said:

- George: You know, you remind me of Indian Michael, you have the same name and looks… Then he smiled and said: But you are smarter and better than him… And you Sally, your beauty reminds me of Urmila.

It was very late when they arrived at home and the kids went to their rooms to sleep after George promised them that he'd tell them all about his trip in the morning. George went to his room to find Katrina waiting for him, wearing one of her best dresses…

- Katrina: Urmila, who you said looks like Sally, means the beautiful or the charming one.
- George: Yes…that is true.
- Katrina: How do you know?! Did you take the advice of Kach and Tom?
- George: You should tell me first how many times you met that Tom?!
- Katrina: I didn’t meet him. I ran into him at the church party two days ago. Why are you avoiding my question? Who is Urmila?
- George: Urmila is a young lady that I met in the hotel. She was very beautiful and told me that her name means the charming one… but tell me what time did you leave Tom?
- Katrina: We stayed together until it was late, but do you expect me to believe that you only met Urmila by chance, and you didn’t forget her?
- George: Yes, I only ran into her, but do you think that I’ll believe that you stayed at the church party till 7am?
- Katrina: Who told you that we stayed until the morning?! Are you spying on me? Don’t you trust me? Don’t you think that I have more right to watch your affairs with pretty girls?!
- George: I’m tired, I’d like to sleep, leave me be…

George lay down on bed, he gave Katrina his back…it seemed that their conversation was about to burst, so he preferred to sleep. Katrina did the same; she lay down on the bed and gave him her back. George kept talking to himself, “Am I rude to her? Is it true that she was at the church party? Did I insult her?” Then he continued, “But I punished her and took my revenge, I made her restless and I planted the roots of doubts in her mind, as she has done to me.” Then he pretended to sleep until he finally did fall asleep.

When he woke up the following morning, he found that Katrina had already prepared the breakfast that he likes, so he tried to forget his anger, and he smiled at her…

- Katrina: Come on honey, eat your breakfast.
- George: Thank you darling, I didn’t give you your present… wait a minute, I’ll get you the cross that you asked for.
- Katrina: Thank you honey… it’s really beautiful, I thought that you forgot to buy it.
- George: How could I ever forget your demands darling, this cross was the most

important thing that I wanted to buy from India.

- Katrina: The Holy Spirit was protecting you when you held that cross. By the way, what happened about the answers to your questions?
- George: It was a great trip; I got the chance to learn about many religions and ideas.
- Katrina: Did you visit Saint James church? It's an architectural wonder!
- George: Yes, I did… it was really wonderful. By the way, I thought that there were many Christians in India, but I found that there is in fact only a limited number.
- Katrina: Yes, that is true, unfortunately. People don't give up the religion of Hinduism easily. They only seem to leave Hinduism to become terrorists. By and large, the church is thinking of changing its strategy towards them to change that situation.
- George: Terrorists!! You mean Muslims?
- Katrina: Yes, those savage Berbers.
- George: Though one of our company's contracts was with Muslims, and in spite of their good behavior, honesty and principles, I never felt at ease dealing with them, especially Karimul Allah- I really don't know why.
- Katrina: Your pure soul that loves goodness can never love those souls that kill and destroy.
- George: Perhaps, but I found that Muslims are actually the easiest to deal with and that they stick to their principles, compared to others in India.
- Katrina: Why do you say that, didn't you meet any Christians there?
- George: Ha ha ha! Actually I did, I met Michael, who's very religious. But I don't know why I felt okay with him, although he was immoral!
- Katrina: Religious and immoral?!
- George: Yes, he's very religious, an extremist actually, but he's immoral. Unfortunately Kach asked him to arrange some Indian ladies for me, and he asked him to manipulate the contracts of the employees, and Michael agreed.
- Katrina: What?! Religious and brings girls!
- George: Yes. He resumed to rest assure Katrina by adding: The strange thing is that he was astonished that I refused.
- Katrina: He steals people's rights and he facilitates adultery! This man hardly represents Christianity, honey. We should differentiate between Christianity and Christians.

- George: Yes, of course. But there are two points we should consider: first, as you said, we should differentiate between ideas and religions from one side and from people who follow them on the other, so as not to hold the religions responsible for the mistakes of their followers. But on the other hand, the other point is that don't you think that people's behaviors originate from their ideas and religions? So if they had a tendency towards certain behavior, it may indicate that their religion is behind it?
- Katrina: Yes, you're right. But your friend Michael is an exception.
- George: Perhaps…. all religious people like you give the same reply.
- Katrina: What about the answers to the questions of the doctor?
- George: I believe that the answers are clear in my mind now.
- Katrina: So, we're done, there's no problem now?
- George: We only have answers to the doctor's questions, that is the answer is with God Who created divine religions. And I think we're on the way to reach the answers to the major questions. Then and only then will we reach true happiness.
- Katrina: Keep on and you'll reach your goal honey, but how are you certain about your answer to the doctor's questions? I mean, how did you become sure that the answer lies within a divine religion?
- George: The answer didn't need too much deliberation since I was introduced to a number of non-divine Indian religions, and they are far from being beneficial for their followers, let alone being beneficial for the entire human race. Those religions deal with their people in a way that contradicts human nature and contradicts wisdom and justice. I noticed that here in the West we beautify those religions, and that actually hides their reality. I'll see what Tom's opinion is when I meet him.
- Katrina: When are you going to meet him?
- George: In four days. Anyway, I'm late for work, and I think you're late too darling.
- Katrina: No honey don't worry, I told them that I'd be late today, because I thought that you wouldn't go in today.
- George: I'll go only for a few hours to hand over some tasks… excuse me darling; I'll see you when I get back.

(2)

George went to work and headed directly to Kach’s office, who welcomed him warmly and said:

- Kach: You did a great job on this trip, you’re wonderful George!
- George: All the deals were done the way we wanted, but how did you know?!
- Kach: Michael sent us a letter of commendation and he told us that the deal was done. Michael has the ability to work correctly and he’s also flexible regarding human needs and pleasures, though he’s religious. He resumed grinning: But Motee’ ar-Rahman is just like a piece of wood, he’s completely inflexible. Tell me, what did you do with him?
- George: We signed the contracts, and here they are, stamped from the British embassy in India. We only need to have them stamped from the Indian embassy in London now.
- Kach: I can’t believe my eyes, how did you do that?
- George: Reaching an agreement with him was the fastest and easiest thing in my whole carrier. He’s flexible and energetic and he thinks in a way that makes everybody gain a profit, though he’s unorganized. He let me complete the agreement with his brother Karimul Allah, who was practical and organized, though I was ill at ease with him.
- Kach: I can’t believe what you say, though I’m holding the contracts in my hands. I don’t feel at ease dealing with any of them. I don’t know how they view life; they deal with life as if it’s a war, perhaps this is because of their beliefs - you know they’re Muslims… Tell me George, how are my girls? Don’t you feel ashamed of sleeping with my girls?
- George: No, because I didn’t sleep with your girls, or with anyone else in India for that matter.
- Kach: So Michael was mean to you, and wasn’t as generous to you as he was to me?
- George: On the contrary, he was very generous to me. I was the one who refused the girls.
- Kach: I can’t believe that any sane man would waste such a rare chance. I wanted to travel to enjoy being with those young ladies, they’re gorgeous, but I had a meeting with the board of directors. I don’t know when you’re ever going to have a life and take advantage of its opportunities. If you hadn’t signed all of those

contracts, I would've sworn you didn't travel! Going to India without enjoying the beauty of the Indian ladies is absolutely meaningless. Tell me the truth my friend, did you meet prettier girls so you didn't need mine?

- George: Yes, Urmila is much prettier than your girls, and she offered herself when we were in the hotel, ha ha ha, but I refused.
- Kach: I cannot understand your perspective towards life and its pleasures.
- George: But what's the meaning of life? Why are we alive? Why were we created, if we're going to spend our lives escaping from ourselves to our whims and lusts?
- Kach: Ha ha ha! A great lecture. Actually you can tell it to your doctor. Never mind, we must arrange what we shall do next after signing those contracts. By the way, the company is very grateful that you accomplished this task.
- George: I'll start with the arrangements and I'll finish them within the next few days. And I am grateful to the company; it was a wonderful trip.
- Kach: Though I don't know why you found the trip wonderful, I'd like to tell you that there's another and even more wonderful trip waiting for you, if you like.
- George: Another trip?
- Kach: Yes, to the sacred lands.
- George: What sacred lands?
- Kach: Though I don't believe they're sacred, the ones who believe in divine religions consider Jerusalem and Tel Aviv sacred. All my folks live there and they invited me to go, but I think they're too religious! My mother is Jewish, but I don't believe in any religion. The Jerusalem Security Company has accepted the technical offer that we proposed. If you want to go, you have one week to make up your mind, or I will go instead. But I prefer that you go as it seems that you're better than me in making deals… you have one week to decide.
- George: Fine, I'll think about the trip and tell you my decision.

(3)

George left the company to go home straight after finishing his work. The traffic was unusually heavy and it took him two and a half hours to arrive at home; he usually takes no more than 45 minutes. He was tired when he arrived. Katrina rushed to meet him and said:

- Katrina: Thank God you're safe honey; I was worried to death about you.
- George: I don't know what happened today, it took two and half hours to get

home!

- Katrina: The subway stopped completely today.
- George: Why?
- Katrina: There was a terrorist bomb attack in the subway. Thank God it wasn't in the central area otherwise thousands of people would've died.
- George: Any injuries?
- Katrina: A newly wedded man and wife were killed. Two men, a woman and a child were injured.
- Katrina: What kind of hearts do those Muslim terrorist have?

George took the remote control to watch the news on the television, saying:

- George: Who told you they're Muslims? Let's watch the news and see.
- Katrina: No one but them could do such a horrible thing. They are heartless.

George watched the news on the TV which reported that the terrorist bomb blast had happened about four hours earlier. All the news broadcasting agencies were of the opinion that Muslims had been behind the attack, but no official accusations had been charged yet. There was a general mobilization of the British security forces, but everyone wanted to go home and all the roads were completely blocked.

- George: It seems that you were right; Muslims were behind the attack, though there's no official statement confirming that yet.
- Katrina: Believe me, they're cruel heartless terrorists. They kill people to be religious.
- George: They kill people to be religious?!
- Katrina: Yes, they have what they call Jihad, and they worship by killing and torturing people. See the difference between this violent religion and the bounteous love that Christianity offers. Christ sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity, and all Christians do the same, but the followers of Muhammad know nothing but killing.
- George: Those Muslims are really weird; perhaps that's why I was ill at ease with Karimul Allah.
- Katrina: Thank God you came back safe and sound; and they didn't kill you or blow you up!
- George: Ha ha ha! Imagine if Mote ar-Rahman had blasted and blown me up… actually he was very gentle and he gave me a present, aloes wood fragrance.

- Katrina: Don’t use it honey, it might be poisonous. Make sure it’s safe first.
- George: I don’t like aloes wood fragrance. I’ll give it to Adam, as he wanted me to bring him aloes wood fragrance from India. I’ll first have to make sure that it’s safe because I don’t want to harm my friend.
- Katrina: Yes, you’d better do that; those terrorists are dangerous.
- George: You’ve reminded me… I haven’t visited Adam yet since I came back, and I promised him that I’d visit him as soon as I arrived.
- Katrina: Is he Protestant or Catholic?
- George: Can you believe it, I don’t know? And I actually didn’t ask him, nor did he tell me. I’ll try to meet him tomorrow and perhaps I’ll ask him then… are we going to spend some quality time together today, or are you going to bed now?
- Katrina: No, we can spend some time together.

In the morning, George decided not to go in to work; he finished some tasks from home over the phone and the internet. The subway was partly closed, which meant that the traffic was congested. He called Adam many times but he didn’t answer, so he decided to turn on the TV to see the latest on the attack and the terrorists. By that time, the subway was back in full swing and some groups of Indians, Pakistanis, Arabs, and British Muslims had been arrested. All evidence pointed to Muslims and indicated that they were behind the attack. One of the injured people was Indian and his travelling on the subway was suspicious. An ID card of a Pakistani was found at the scene of the crime, and the policemen were still searching for him. The police warned the citizens against anyone they saw leaving a bag in any public place, especially if he was a Muslim.

George finished watching the news. He got dressed to go to meet Adam in the coffee shop, but didn’t find him there. He asked a waiter about Adam’s whereabouts and he told him that had taken five days leave.

- George: When did he start his leave? And do you know why he took it?
- The waiter: He took it to do some research for his university project, and he first went on leave about three days ago.

George went to Adam’s place and knocked at the door, but nobody answered. He left him a note to say that he had come and had not found him, and then he left and went home. When he arrived he found Katrina glued to the news.

- George: Is there anything new about that subway explosion?

- Katrina: No news. They're still looking for the Pakistani who escaped, but there are fears that London might have another explosion.
- George: I really hope that they find him today, so that people can be at ease. What kind of hearts do those people have?!
- Katrina: Did you go to work today?
- George: No, the subway was partly closed in the morning. I went to see my friend Adam instead, but he had taken a few days' leave to do some research.
- Katrina: Are you going to go to work tomorrow?
- George: Yes, I have some tasks to handle. And then I'll go to meet Dr. Tom.
- Katrina: This time do you have specific and clear answers for Dr. Tom?
- George: Yes, I feel that fate drove us to find specific answers the first time, and this is the second time we have found specific answers.
- Katrina: You're always fortunate; the Holy Spirit is with you and upholds you.
- George: I think I know what his new questions will be.
- Katrina: You know them?
- George: Yes, it seems that I no longer have a lot of options. I don't know if Tom did this to set me up, or it's only a coincidence - or maybe it's the Holy Spirit, as you said.
- Katrina: And how is that?
- George: Firstly, the choices were regarding the sources of the answers, and it was clear in my mind that I would only get the answers from the Creator, and that the idea of atheism is a chaotic escapism idea that doesn't lead to anything. How can the creation of a system be driven by chaos? How can anyone but the Creator know how we were created? Atheism contradicts reason, common sense and religion, even if those who follow atheism pretend to be well cultured and modern. The next question was: Who is the Creator. Then we divided the ideas and religions of people concerning the Creator into two categories: man-made religions and divine religions. It was crystal clear in my mind after my trip to India that man-made religions are neither in accordance with human nature nor with its followers, so they don't provide answers for mankind, and in fact contain such a lot of fables that they cannot be dealt with. Now the question must be: which of the divine religions can provide logical answers that don't contradict scientific and human facts?
- Katrina: I told you before honey that Christianity is the salvation for mankind.

- George: And what about Judaism? And what about Islam?
- Katrina: Is it possible that one day you'll be a Muslim wearing a bomb belt in the subway honey?
- George: Perhaps! Ha ha ha! Or maybe I'll be Jewish like Kach, who cares about nothing but sex and money.

(4)

During work, George tried to call Adam several times, but his phone was switched off. George became worried about Adam and wanted to meet him before his appointment with the doctor, so he sent him a message: "I bought a souvenir for you from India, I hope we can meet; could you please call me back," but he received no answer.

The appointment with the doctor was due, so George went to the clinic. Brad was at the front desk and he welcomed George warmly when he saw him.

- Brad: Hey, tell me about India and its ladies.
- George: It's a beautiful and amazing country, but I'm here to meet Tom; this is the time of my appointment.
- Brad: Are you in a hurry, or is it that you don't want to talk with me? Never mind, it's okay.
- George: I just want to see Tom.
- Brad: Go on in - but remember that you'll come back again one day.

George went in to see Tom. Tom welcomed him and was unusually warm. It was clear that Tom was happy to see him. Then Tom said to George:

- I'm so happy to see you. I was eager to hear your ideas, opinions, views and answers.
- George: You're waiting for my answers and opinions?!
- Tom: Maybe you're surprised to hear that, but it's the truth! It seems that your philosophy matches my scientific and philosophical way of thinking, and it's also perfect for me because I'm starting to do some research about religions myself. That's why I go to the church regularly to carry out psychological and religious studies. Then he smiled and added: Let's talk about you; did you renounce all religions, as I expected?
- George: Yes, of course I did…
- Tom: Great, I expected that you would do that…

- George: But let me continue. Yes, without any doubt, I renounced all man-made religions.
- Tom: What do you mean?
- George: I mean that we have to start our quest for finding answers from God the Creator as is stated in the divine religions.
- Tom: And why do you think that divine religions are better than man-made ones?
- George: It’s not my own opinion; the followers of man-made religions know that they themselves were behind the evolution of these religions, and that they’re still developing them now.
- Tom: Developing them?!
- George: Yes, they develop their religions and they know that those religions are made by humans, and that they’re not divine. How can a human being just like us have answers to our major questions? We may even have a better understanding and more knowledge than them. How can human beings like us know the reason behind their creation if they don’t know the Creator? People can’t create their own selves, and obviously no animals can create humans. Don’t you think that those man-made religions are the reason behind the spread of atheism all around the world?
- Tom: You’re talking as if the divine religions are, without doubt, the truth!
- George: Actually, I don’t know. Your question was about the choice between divine and man-made religions, and I have no doubt at all in the final choice I have made.
- Tom: You’re the one who separated the matter into two choices, not me.
- George: And you were convinced by that, and also you are the one who modified the question. Anyhow, we’re generally proceeding in a scientifically correct way, even though I don’t like it that much. And it is possible at any moment for us to renounce all religions, in which case we would return to atheism.
- George: But I don’t think that will happen; atheism is just like a dark scary tunnel that doesn’t lead to happiness, that’s why so many atheists end their lives by committing suicide.
- Tom: So you’re saying that I’ll commit suicide soon?! But some followers of divine religions also commit suicide. Why do you think they do that?
- George: I expect that you realized the darkness of the path of atheism, and that’s why you started to do some research on religions. But about your question on the

religious people who commit suicide, I really don’t have a specific answer for that question.

- Tom: Perhaps. What matters now is that we’re going to focus on divine religions, and if we didn’t find satisfactory answers about these, then we must find another solution. Although I’m an atheist, I’m convinced by most of what you’ve said about atheism. However, maybe we have another alternative, since I don’t like to cancel all of my choices completely.
- George: Only three religions left then.
- Tom: Are you going to include Islam, the religion of terrorism, in our discussion?
- George: I don’t know. But you don’t like to omit choices?!
- Tom: Yes, you’re right. But I imagine that you’ll have to hide in Tora Bora Mountains, just like bin Laden. Ha ha ha!
- George: Though I hate terrorism very much - and I’m sure that it has no reason, no religion, and no heart - the scientific and fair method mustn’t exclude any religion.
- Tom: So as not lose any time, let’s note the challenge we have to face now, which is to choose between three religions. And I suggest that you start with the religion whose sources everybody agrees on.
- George: But everyone agrees on the sources of the three religions
- Tom: I mean the Jewish religion, as Jews, Christians and Muslims all believe in Prophet Moses.
- George: I’ve got it now. But I believe that we could follow another completely different perspective.
- Tom: And how is that, my philosopher friend?
- George: Muslims believe in Moses, Jesus and Muhammad; the Christians believe in Moses and Jesus, while the Jews believe in only Moses.
- Tom: I think this is the correct picture, but from a completely different perspective. But I insist on my opinion to start with Judaism, it’s the oldest divine religion.
- George: I completely agree with you.
- Tom: I hope that you take enough time in studying each religion thoroughly; you’re talking about history, philosophy, ideology, and reality all together. After taking your time in learning Judaism, don’t either refute it or adopt it until you get to know about Christianity, and after you take enough time to study Christian-

ity, don't either refute it or adopt it until you take enough time to study Islam. He smiled and resumed: That's if you insist to live in Tora Bora!

- George: Fine, my question is: How, in your opinion, do you think I can get to know about those religions?
- Tom: Reading and research are treasures that have no end, and it will be also useful if you know any priest or learned religious men from the three religions. I wish you could go to Tel Aviv to get a better chance to learn about Judaism, as you did in India.
- George: What a coincidence! I have a very short business trip to Tel Aviv, but I haven't decide whether to go or not yet.
- Tom: I have no idea if you are ready to travel again or not, as you have just come back from India; but if you have a chance to go to Tel Aviv, don't waste it. I think it's going to be very useful for you. Regarding Christianity, you should go to Rome, and to know about Islam go to Mecca - but I think that the terrorists won't allow you to go there!
- George: Your words have encouraged me to agree to go to Tel Aviv. I'll check out any matters I have to see to and let you know my decision.
- Tom: It seems that you're a lucky man; Jewish ladies are charming, funny and from many different races. You'll have a variety of ladies to choose from. After enjoying Indian ladies, now you have the chance to enjoy the Jewish. How lucky you are!

George wasn't feeling at ease hearing that from Tom, and he wanted to hurt him.

- George: Don't you enjoy your female patients from different races, and you also enjoy your parties that you use to complete your research on those different ladies?
- Tom: I got what you're implying - gorgeous Katrina. Her charm springs from the fact that she's completely devoted to her religion; she doesn't have time for anything else.
- George: Or maybe you like enjoying Indian ladies; that's why you continue doing your hard research all through the night until the morning.
- Tom: I understand totally what you want to say. It was until the morning because of the fire that started in the building next to the church. Then he turned to George and resumed firmly: Though I have a long history of manipulating women, Ka-

trina's completely different. She only thinks about Catholicism and how to spread it.

- George: You want to convince me that all the time that you spent together you only argued and talked about religion, Christianity, and belief?!
- Tom: There was absolutely nothing else. The church arranges those parties to attract people to the church and teach them religion.
- George: And during those dancing parties many love stories start?!
- Tom: Yes, you're right. But Katrina is different, in spite of her beauty. She has a clear objective and she never deviates from her path; she only cares about serving Catholicism and enhancing people's belief in Jesus - and that's why she's gorgeous.
- George: Mmm, that's why you drink wine together to increase your belief, and for the sake of humanity?!
- Tom: Though I don't like your way of talking, I feel that I'm obliged to be grateful to Katrina for what she has done for me. She made my heart feel the light of belief for the first time in fifteen years. Yes, Katrina and I drank wine together at a church party, as I'm an atheist as you know. But I was surprised that Katrina drank wine though she's very religious.
- George: And what happened after belief had reached its peak, and after your sacrifice for humanity had reached its peak, and after elevation had reached its peak, and after drunkenness and hallucination had reached their peak?!
- Tom: To be honest with you, Katrina had drunk too much after we were done with the problem of the fire. She had more wine than usual.
- George: And then you got high together and mixed together!?
- Tom: George, believe me, we did nothing shameful, but when she drank too much she felt dizzy, so I carried her to the car and waited until she sobered up. And that's why we were out late until the morning. Then she was very grateful to me and she was ashamed of herself. So I wanted to show her my gratitude to her for her gratefulness and I kissed her, but then I felt ashamed of what I had done, as it was clear that she hated my kiss.
- George: Great … a real romantic story, I have to clap my hands for you!
- Tom: Sally, her friend and neighbor, was with us all the time. You can ask her to make sure that I told you the truth. And you can check my Facebook page; you'll find all the photos that were taken that day. I didn't have to say that, but I wanted

to be frank with you. Though you make me nervous, I don’t know why I treat you differently - maybe because we have the same problem, or maybe for some other reason.

- George: We have the same problem?
- Tom: Perhaps you’re surprised to hear that, but for a long time I have had internal grief. And one year ago it increased greatly, but I don’t know why; and the strange matter is that since I met you and started my research about religions, I’m feeling much better, but I also really don’t know why. Perhaps it’s because of your questions and their answers, or because of the church and its spirituality, or perhaps both. By the way, what about you and your attacks of depression? And what about the rush of questions that used to destroy you?
- George: They’re much less. Perhaps because I’m too busy finding answers for the path to happiness, and maybe because my trips keep me busy so I have no time to be sad.
- Tom: Wow, that’s a good expression “the path to happiness”.
- George: Yes, I heard that expression from an old man that I met once by chance in the street. Then I met a waiter in a coffee shop who repeated the same expression.
- Tom: All people want to walk on the path to happiness. Some people believe that they’re already on that path, but facts always remain as facts.
- George: What do you mean?
- Tom: I mean that anyone that belongs to a certain religion, group, creed or sect, believes that they’re on the path to happiness, and that they’re the only ones that have found that path. He smiled and resumed: It is strange how fate makes people take different courses!!
- George: But it’s obvious that neither I nor you are on the path to happiness, as if we were we would’ve been happy, and not suffering from grief and misery.
- Tom: Anyhow, what matters now is that we should summarize what we have done together so far. First we agreed that happiness lies in finding answers to the major questions, and those answers must be found from the Creator, not from humans - which cancels the idea of atheism. Then you decided that the Creator has a divine religion, not a man-made one. And now we’re trying to recognize that religion.
- George: Theoretically, the followers of that religion have the right to walk on the path of happiness; and I think I’m on my way to reach what Katrina said from the beginning, but I don’t want to rush and not pass through all the stages, especially

after the attacks of questions I used to have and its complications have decreased, and I now feel that I can take profound and major issues easily.

- Tom: There's no doubt that Katrina who sacrificed everything for the sake of God deserves to be right, but let's complete our path. I'm waiting for you after you come back from Tel Aviv, and then we can resume our journey.
- George: Okay, fine. Sorry, I took much of your time today. I want to ask if it is possible to have our next appointment in two weeks from now if I travel to Tel Aviv, but if I don't then let's meet next week.
- Tom: Sure, we can meet in two weeks, so you can have enough time to read about Judaism, and make sure to travel to the sacred land to enhance your information.
- George: That's a beautiful expression, "the sacred land"!
- Tom: Yes, it's a sacred land for all religions; that's why all the wars of religion have been there and in the surrounding area.
- George: I'm keen to travel; I'll try to rearrange all the things I have to do.

George left Tom; he found Brad waiting for him, smiling slyly. He said...

- Brad: How's Katrina? Are you leaving her to go to Tora Bora?
- George: Tora Bora?!!
- Brad: Don't be naive and let yourself be deceived by words!
- George: What do you mean?
- Brad: Nothing, but Katrina is gorgeous and Tom is handsome. You can travel, but try to be logical, not naive.

George didn't reply. He just left the clinic immediately as he was very angry. He was preoccupied about the fact that Brad had said the same thing that Tom had said. He asked himself: "Did Brad overhear my conversation with Tom, or was it mental telepathy?"

(5)

George kept calling Adam, but he got no answer. He was worried about him and went to his place more than once, but didn't find him. Katrina felt that George was nervous, and said:

- Katrina: You look upset honey, what's wrong?
- George: I haven't found my friend Adam. I called him many times and even went to his place, but I still didn't find him.
- Katrina: I was afraid that you might have been hurt by a terrorist. And also when I

saw you upset I became worried. It seems that you care about Adam a lot?!

- George: Though Adam is simple, he has been very helpful to me, and I feel relieved when I listen to him.
- Katrina: What do his colleagues at work say about his whereabouts?
- George: They say he’s taken leave to do his university research; he studies religions, as I told you.
- Katrina: And when will that leave end?
- George: The day after tomorrow, but I need to meet him urgently to consult with him about some things. By the way, I want to know your opinion about a business trip to Jerusalem; Tel Aviv.
- Katrina: To the sacred land?!
- George: Yes, we have a potential contract with a Jewish security company.
- Katrina: But you just arrived back from a business trip, and I’m afraid that you’ll be tired.
- George: I won’t be tired, but I just wanted to spend more time with you, Michael and Sally. I wasn’t enthusiastic about it until I met Tom today and he encouraged me to travel.
- Katrina: Why?
- George: He said that I would have a better chance to learn about Judaism if I was close to it.
- Katrina: You should believe him with regards to that point. You’ll have a chance to learn about the three divine religions; it’s a sacred land for all divine religions.
- George: And what do you think about that?
- Katrina: I didn’t think about the point that Tom raised. So if you think that the trip will be useful then go and be happy, and I’ll wait for you here with the kids.
- George: What Tom said is logical, but I’m not so enthusiastic about it - so I’ll try to make the trip as short as possible.
- Katrina: You’re lucky; first you go to the land of wonders, then to the land of legends.
- George: I’m lucky to have a wife like you darling.
- Katrina: I want to give you a present.
- George: And what’s that?
- Katrina: After you come back from Tel Aviv and have some rest, I want us to go on a vacation together and travel to Rome. You traveled to the land of wonders,

then the land of legends, and finally to the land of churches, to get to know about Catholicism in its home land. And then you'll definitely have a chance to know what's called the path to happiness.

- George: And I'll have a chance to learn more about Christianity, as Tom suggested. Then he resumed: Okay darling, then I'll tell Kach tomorrow that I'll travel. I hope the emergency in the country ends before I travel; it is bothering me. I don't want to travel until I make sure that you're going to be fine, and to make sure that those criminal terrorists are arrested.
- Katrina: The policemen are still looking for the suspected Pakistani man; they arrested a group of his friends and some of the people who know him.
- George: Where can he escape to? He'll be arrested today or tomorrow for sure. I hate terrorism and killing so much.

George directly headed to Kach's office after he arrived at work. He wanted to tell him that he accepted to go on the business trip, but that it should take no more than four days.

- Kach: Four days is more than enough.
- George: Is my mission specific and clear?
- Kach: Yes, the Jerusalem Security Company want to sign electronic protection contracts with us, and we have already reached agreements about everything.
- George: Why don't we just send them the contracts to be signed without travelling?
- Kach: The technical manager there has many questions, she cares about details very much, and actually we have to convince her. She's the main opponent of the deal, and the final decision is in her hands so no deals are going to be completed without her approval.
- George: So I have to make sure that I know all the details about the technical issues, and I should read the reasons for her objection in the previous e-mails.
- Kach: Yes, this is very important. And eventually they'll sign the contract, whether they want to or not.
- George: You look very confident.
- Kach: I'm confident for many reasons. Firstly: Israelis have a phobia about Hamas, the terrorist group, and they're worried about their technical superiority, so they need to sign protection contracts with us and with other companies.
- George: They have every right to fear them - terrorists are heartless. Don't you

see how we suffer here in London?!

- Kach: But Jews are terrorists, even more than Hamas and others!
- George: Perhaps, but I don't know. What I do know is that the terrorists in London want to kill hundreds and maybe thousands of people. They have no religion, conscious, or heart to stop themselves.
- Kach: Let's not talk about terrorism now. The second reason is that Levvi, the technical manager, is Jewish and her manager is a Jew too.
- George: I don't understand the relation between being Jewish and signing the contracts.
- Kach: They're Jewish and I know a lot about them. Benjamin her manager will sign the contract with us to achieve personal benefits for himself, and the technical manager won't refuse his demands because if she refused he'll be an obstacle in front of her. She obeys him because of his religion.
- George: And you, are you a Jew?!
- Kach: My mother is, and that makes me Jewish too, and this is the third reason; I'm Jewish and that's why they have approved to sign the contract with me. But you know I'm an atheist, and that religion means nothing to me unless it brings me money and pleasure. Ha ha ha! By the way, Levvi is a young lady, she's 25 years old, and she's one of the prettiest women that I've ever seen. If you want to have fun with her just tell Benjamin and she'll be at your beck and call on the same day. Regarding Benjamin, I'll give him $10,000 to sign the contract.
- George: This is a large sum of money?!
- Kach: Yes, you're right, but I raised the contract value to $150,000, and he approved it because he'll have his sum.
- George: How degrading that is!! This is a betrayal of the company and the country; this isn't commerce!
- Kach: Money to us is something else, as we're Jewish; the real merchants. That's why we control the commerce of the whole world. No one can compete with us in our passion for money or commerce.
- George: What you say makes me afraid of Judaism and the Jewish personality.
- Kach: Ha ha ha! There's an old saying that goes, "you have to count your fingers after you shake hands with a Jew, and if you found them still five you need to make sure that you know how to count." What matters now is that you have to give Benjamin the $10,000, and everything will run easily and smoothly.

- George: Okay, we'll resume our conversation about the agreement and its nature after I finish reading the contracts and the literature.
- Kach: Fine. Book the tickets for one week's time, and we'll finish our agreements and meetings before then.

George was busy reading the contracts of the deal and the technical details until the end of the working day. He left the office late and still hadn't finished his work. He kept calling Adam while he was working, but got no answer. He went home and started to watch the news on the television. He was hoping that they had arrested that Pakistani, before he travels.

He heard that there were many new possibilities regarding the bomb attack, and that they had arrested other people who didn't belong to any Islamic terrorist organization, but rather the Sita Liberal Movement. Katrina sat beside him and she was annoyed to hear the news.

- George: It's very strange that there're new findings regarding the bomb attack.
- Katrina: This is only a camouflage, only terrorist Muslims do such things.
- George: The Sita Liberal Movement is the group that is accused now.
- Katrina: Perhaps they want the terrorists to be less cautious so they contact each other and move freely. That will make it easier for the policemen to arrest that Pakistani, and that's why they made that declaration.
- George: In the world of politics, everything is possible.

(6)

George was busy throughout the next day arranging for the trip and preparing the contracts. He kept calling Adam, but his mobile phone was switched off. George sent Adam an e-mail, and he sent him a message on Facebook. He was supposed to be back at his work that day, as his friend the waiter had said. George really wished he had met him before then. It meant a lot to him.

After finishing his work, George passed by the coffee shop and asked about Adam, but he didn't find him!

- George: He didn't come today?
- George: But his leave ended today, didn't it?
- The waiter: Yes, but he didn't come or call. He never does that!
- George: When do you expect him to come?
- The waiter: I don't know. He was supposed to be at work today, but the absent

party cannot be blamed.

- George: Thank you, if he comes please tell him that George asked about him many times.
- The waiter: Okay, I'll tell him.

George went back home. He was very worried about Adam, his sudden disappearance made him terrified. He used all means to communicate him: phone, e-mail, and Facebook. He went to the coffee shop, he went to his place many times, but all his efforts were in vain.

- Katrina: Hello honey. Did you meet your friend Adam?
- George: I didn't find him; he didn't go to work today, though his leave has ended.
- Katrina: I hope that he hasn't been affected by the terrorist attack.
- George: I hope so too. What's the latest news? Did they arrest the bomber?
- Katrina: Unfortunately, the news today says that they set most of the Muslim prisoners free!
- George: They set all the criminals free!?
- Katrina: They say that the investigations indicated that the bomber belongs to the Sita Liberal Movement.
- George: You remind me of what Karimullah - that man that I felt ill at ease with - said: "The terrorist is the one who doesn't agree with you, and if he did, you'd make a hero out of him." It seems that he was right.
- Katrina: I'm not convinced. I think that the Pakistani man is behind that bomb attack. They said that the cameras captured his photo!
- George: But perhaps Karimullah was right; did they arrest the accused persons from the Sita Movement?
- Katrina: Yes, and they said that it was a criminal and not a political act.
- George: I can understand that the criminals can change, but how did the nature of the accident change from being criminal to political?
- Katrina: If Muslims are behind it, it's a terrorist attack.
- George: This is exactly what Karimullah said. What matters is London is now safe, because they arrested the criminals.

George's phone rang. He was hoping that it was Adam, and it was. He answered eagerly.

- George: Finally Adam, I was very worried about you.
- Adam: Ha ha ha! I had a project I had to complete, and I've just finished.

- George: Did you finish your research?
- Adam: Yes, I conducted much in-depth research. But forget about me, and tell me about you.
- George: I'm fine. I want to see you. What about meeting you now?
- Adam: I'm a little bit tired from the project work I had to do, but what about seeing you tomorrow after work?
- George: That's okay; I'll be there before five. We'll have dinner together at the "Happiness Restaurant".
- Adam: Okay, I'll wait for you tomorrow.

George ended the phone call and he began to look relieved

- Katrina: You look happy after the phone-call!
- George: Yes, I don't know why I feel such honesty, simplicity, and deepness in his words!
- Katrina: Is he a Jew or a Christian? A Catholic or Protestant?
- George: I haven't asked him. I'll ask him when I meet him next.

The next day George went to the coffee shop on time. He waited in his car in front of the coffee shop for a few minutes until Adam came and jumped into the car, and then they rode off

- Where've you been, man? I was worried about you.
- Adam: You're so well-mannered. I am very sorry for not answering you; I couldn't respond to your messages because of some compelling circumstances. Tell me about the path to happiness, and about the answers to your questions - and about your trip to India.
- George: The trip to India was very fruitful, I enjoyed it very much. Let's complete this conversation when we arrive at the restaurant.
- Adam: Okay, we're almost there.

George and Adam sat at a small table at the restaurant. The waiter gave them a menu, and Adam looked at it while he was talking to George.

- Adam: This restaurant is beautiful.
- George: It seems that it's your favorite restaurant.
- Adam: I like its name. I like happiness. I think all sane men in the world pursue happiness. By the way, the owner of the restaurant is a foreigner. Where is he from?
- George: Malaysian cuisine is rare in Britain, and this is Malaysian cuisine. Have

you ever been to Malaysia?

- Adam: No.
- George: Malaysia is one of the countries that I'd like to visit. I've never been there before. It's known for its charming nature, and its charming people. Those nations are so pure and simple.
- Adam: Sometimes simplicity is evidence of profound wisdom, and sometimes of naivety.
- George: It's evidence of profound wisdom in this case, for sure. Malaysia is a developed country that is growing at a really fast rate, especially in our technical field.
- Adam: I adore profound simplicity. Then he smiled and said: Or simple profoundness. Tell me about your trip to India.
- George: Let's order first.

George called the waiter. They told him what they wanted, and the waiter went to bring them their food.

- George: The trip to India provided clear answers to my questions, and I think I'm on the path to happiness.
- Adam: Great!
- George: The only thing now is the problem of Tom and Katrina that I told you about, and it was the reason I was sad. I'm so grateful to you for your advice. I really was in a bad psychological shape at the time. And I think now that most probably what you said was true.
- Adam: What do you mean?
- George: You told me that perhaps my doubts are not true. In fact Tom told me about what happened in detail. I don't know why I believed him this time, and I felt that he had changed.
- Adam: All people can change, if given the chance, to become better. Then he smiled and said: And what about finding out which is better, the divine or non-divine religions?
- George: There's no doubt that divine religions are right.
- Adam: You look confident!
- George: Yes, I found many blunders in non-divine religions. Then he laughed and continued: Can you imagine that some people worship rats, others worship cockroaches, and still others worship rocks? It's a strange world. I've no doubt

that the Creator Who can answer my questions isn't a rat, a cockroach, an idol or an animal.

- Adam: Then you're sure that it's a divine religion?
- George: Yes, one of the three divine religions; Judaism, Christianity or Islam.
- Adam: And what's your next step?
- George: I'm trying to study the divine religions one by one. I'll start with Judaism… by the way, what's your religion my friend?
- Adam: What do you think? My name is Adam, after the name of the father of all humanity, and my father's name is Abraham after the name of the father of all the messengers of God and all divine religions.
- George: How?
- Adam: Adam is the father of all humanity; Abraham is the father of all the messengers of God; Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are his offspring.
- George: And which one of them do you follow?
- Adam: Why don't we study the three religions together, maybe I'll change my religion!
- George: I think you're Catholic just like my wife, ha ha ha… the food is here… you know what, it seems that I have been affected by what you said, and I've even repeated what you said about simplicity. But in reality the nature of philosophy is to complicate issues, not simplify them. And our British nature does the same; unfortunately we tend to complicate things rather than simplify them.
- Adam: Simplicity, tolerance, cheerfulness, and happiness are the words that always come together.
- George: And complexity, contradiction, difficulty, misery and grief are the words that always come together. Didn't I tell you: Tom suggested that I go to Tel Aviv to read and learn about Judaism. What do you think?
- Adam: Great, you'll travel to the sacred land!
- George: I told you that you're Catholic.
- Adam: Perhaps your trip will be rich and useful to study the three religions, not only Judaism.
- George: This is exactly what Katrina said when I told her that I would travel to Tel Aviv.
- Adam: It's not necessary to be a Catholic to refer to that area as the sacred land; all the divine religions have the same view about this point. This is the land of

legendss. I think it’s very important for you to go there; you’ll get a better chance to learn about Judaism and other religions. But that trip will not be enough; you need to read a lot.

- George: What do you mean?
- Adam: When are you travelling?
- George: In four days.
- Adam: I suggest that you start reading; I’ll start reading with you about Judaism, that great divine religion.
- George: Judaism is a great religion, are you Jewish?
- Adam: The followers of the three religions believe in Moses, so believing in Moses is not proof that I am a Jew. Why don’t we negotiate without referring to anybody’s background? Let’s not talk about my religion; I might be Jewish, Christian, or Muslim.
- George: Mentioning Islam reminded me of the aloe wood fragrance that you wanted me to buy for you.
- Adam: How much is it?
- George: Ha ha ha! It’s for free. A Muslim client gave it to me as a present; I’m not responsible for it though; it might be tainted or poisonous, as Katrina feared.
- Adam: Ha ha ha! If I use it, will I be a terrorist?
- George: We are living here in London in the days of terror because of the bomb attack, and then suddenly we learn that the attack was a criminal act, not an act of terrorism.
- Adam: Why a criminal and not a terrorist act?
- George: It’s funny, I don’t know why. It seems that it’s as one of the Muslims in India said: “A terrorist is whom you don’t agree with, the one you don’t like.”
- Adam: Terrorism is terrorism. No religion or nation can be described as a terrorist. Don’t you see that we sometimes treat our wives and kids as if we’re terrorists, and some nations pretend that they are fighting terrorism, but they’re terrorists in dealing with terrorism. Violence and savage killings contradict the ABC of reason and religion, no matter who carries them out.
- George: It seems that you’re talking about the imprisonment of some Muslims who were not guilty of the last bomb attack?
- Adam: Yes, and even now, although the police were sure that they were innocent, some of them are still in prison. Don’t you think that this is terrorism?!

- George: Yes. But I don’t know why so many people thought that Muslims were behind that attack.
- Adam: This is normal; you and I are victims of the terrorists of the media and political empires.
- George: How? What do you mean by that?!
- Adam: The media empires articulate our points of view and our opinions about others; but we don’t actually notice or feel it. Many invading nations consider the invaded countries as Berbers that deserve to be killed! Some nations deal with others as if they’re killers and criminals, and they consider other religions as being terrorist religions.
- George: Yes, you’re right. But you seem so worked up. Then he smiled and said: Are you a Muslim?
- Adam: Ha ha ha! Then you’d better be careful because I might blow you up.
- George: I was only joking, my friend.
- Adam: Me to! It’s late. Let’s get going. Could you give me a lift?
- George: Yes of course, let’s go.

Jerusalem, the Country of Religions and and Legends

7

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(1)

George finally finished his travelling preparations. He was keen to finalize the arrangements early so that he could enjoy spending a night with his wife and kids. He was really looking forward to his evening with them since work had occupied most of his time since his return from India. Kach's lengthy meetings, in which he repeated the contracts details more than once until George had memorized them by heart, were also a major culprit, in addition to the fact that he had promised himself to read about Judaism before his departure. He planned on taking advantage of his visit to the countries of legends, searching for an answer to his great questions, and not to concentrate only on the work tasks.

- George: Katrina sweetie, do you want anything from Tel Aviv?
- Katrina: Yes, what would make me happy is for you to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of Mary, and pray there.
- George: I've read a lot about the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It was built by the Empress Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, in 335 AD., and was constructed above Calvary at the place where they discovered the gallows, which was said to be the spot on which Jesus was crucified. The church lasted for approximately 617 years, but then it was burned down by the Persians during their occupation of Jerusalem. It was later rebuilt by monk Modesty, the abbot of Alobeidan Monastery, in 617 AD. It has been repaired repeatedly since then, especially in the era of Constantine in 1048 AD., and also when the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099 AD. They gathered the scattered temples into one church, which is the one that exists now. Although it is not sacred for us, the Protestants, I'll visit it and pray there for your sake, and I'll try to pray at the Church of Mary too. Do you want something else?
- Katrina: No thank you. You seem to have read a lot about Jerusalem!

- George: Not actually; I'm still reading.
- Katrina: Jerusalem is the most important place for Christians, not the Jews, since it is where Jesus was crucified, and it has a lot of historic churches.
- George: Although I'll only be in Israel for a little while, I'll try to visit the Christian monuments and meet with the Christians.
- Katrina: Oh how I wish I could visit these holy sites myself and pray to the Lord there.
- George: So why don't you come with me in that case?
- Katrina: I can't now; I have a lot to do at work, and at the church. Perhaps in the future, after the injustice we live in comes to an end.
- George: Injustice, what injustice?!
- Katrina: In order to show what the Jews call their heritage in Jerusalem, they insult the churches and Christians in Jerusalem.
- George: The history of Jerusalem is rich with all the conflicts that occurred among the divine religions. By the way, it has been said that Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and invaded and lost again 44 times - and divine religions still expect major historical events there. It is truly the land of legends, but I am surprised at your words… since Britain was the one that handed it over to the Jews! So you tell me then, where is this injustice?
- Katrina: Unfortunately, yes. But what you are referring to is called the Balfour Declaration, and it had its political reasons and power struggles.
- George: How come? What are these reasons?
- Katrina: Britain's entry into World War I (1914 AD - 1918 AD), since it was in need of Jewish support both politically and scientifically during World War I, and at the same time the Zionist movement was looking for someone to support its project to establish a national homeland for the Jews on the Palestinian land.
- George: Only an exchange of interests?!
- Katrina: No, there were other European reasons: such as the desire to remove Jews from Europe; since the major part of the Jews were not able to integrate into their place of residence, and they were working as a body separate from the state. There were also other reasons which aimed at planting a different force in Palestine, which is the bridge that connects between Egypt and Africa on the one side, and between the Arabs and Muslims in Asia on the other, in addition to reasons concerned with the balance of power. Then there was the domination of the Jews

in some sensitive positions in the State of the Ottoman Empire, which was a threat to Europe, since Britain wanted to inherit this state.

- George: You seem rather prejudiced against Britain.
- Katrina: Of course not, I'm only prejudiced against the policy that doesn't think about religion. Wouldn't it have been better to have occupied Jerusalem and made it a Christian capital?
- George: So what is needed is another kind of occupation: Christian rather than Jewish!! But I disagree with you as I think that there was a religious reason in the Balfour Declaration.
- Katrina: What is the religious reason from your point of view?
- George: The wrong interpretations of Christianity's teachings is what made the Zionist Movement spread widely within the Christian church, and it justified racial acts and war crimes in the name of religion.
- Katrina: Excuse me; the Catholics weren't involve in this.
- George: You're right, we, the Protestants, played a great part in this. We have groups that believe that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was an absolute necessity; because it completes the prophecies of the Bible in the Old and New Testaments, and prepares for the coming of the second Christ to Earth as a victorious King. The Christian Zionists believe that it is their duty to defend the Jewish people in general and the Jewish state in particular. Then he smiled and said: So in fact you are criticizing the Protestants and not the British. Anyhow, Israel has become a reality now.
- Katrina: But our churches and our sacred areas and priests should not be persecuted.
- George: Injustice in all forms and manifestations is bad, whether Jewish or Christian. It is not the first time for the Christian Jews to be persecuted, isn't that so?!
- Katrina: Certainly. The first one was Jesus, who sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity, and who was killed by the Jews, then the persecution of his followers, and even the persecution of our brothers in Jerusalem.
- George: Ha ha ha! It seems that I entered into the battles of religions and their history before even arriving to Jerusalem. Let's go to sleep before it gets too late, because I must set off for the airport after midnight.

(2)

George arrived in Tel Aviv on Thursday morning at half past eight. He was greeted by Benjamin, in whose eyes he saw a spark of intelligence and shrewdness…

- Benjamin: Welcome... welcome to Jerusalem, the Holy Land.
- George: Hello, how happy I feel to arrive in this holy city.
- Benjamin: Kach told me that you'll only be here for a short while; just four days.
- George: Yes, I don't like travelling all the time; I was in India before coming here, but Kach insisted and honored me with the chance to visit the Holy City.
- Benjamin: I've arranged everything, and the contract will be signed within two days; don't pay much attention to the subject, your presence is only to confirm that the contract passed in a natural way.
- George: Good.
- Benjamin: Will we go to the hotel or the company?
- George: To the hotel; to drop of my bag, and then we can go directly to the company.
- Benjamin: Okay, no problem. Today's Thursday and Saturday is Levvi's day off, so perhaps you should meet with her today and tomorrow. She's a very religious woman and resourceful technician who is interested in the protection program being more powerful than the terrorists' ability to penetrate it.
- George: The protection program that we have presented to you is solid, so don't worry about it.
- Benjamin: With Levvi, you should focus on this and on your eagerness to protect the security of Israel; this is what she is very interested in. In fact you'll be surprised as any dialogue with her may take ideological, philosophical and non-technical dimensions.
- George: Ideological and philosophical?!
- Benjamin: Yes, and this is a part of her bad nature. Anyhow, if you have problems in dealing with her, please tell me. Then he smiled and said: Despite her obstinacy, she doesn't refuse any request from me at all.
- George: Good.

They arrived at the hotel and George dropped off his luggage. After that he immediately went down to Benjamin and headed to the company. The building of the company wasn't big or attractive, being more of a mediocre building,

crowded with staff. The security at the entrance of the district was intense, and so was the security of the company building.

They went to Benjamin's office, who phoned Levvi immediately and asked her to come.

- Benjamin: The problem will start now.
- George: Problem! Why?
- Benjamin: Her religious fanaticism makes her not understand life properly, she is also passionate about debating as she loves it and she never gets fed up with it, but with pressure she finally yields.

After a few minutes a very beautiful lady came wearing a conservative dress, though it did not hide her fascinating beauty. Benjamin hastened to present her to George.

- Benjamin: Levvi, the director of the technical department in our company. He then referred to George: This is George the software department official in the Advanced Electronics Company, from Britain.
- Levvi: Welcome, thanks for coming. I have many technical inquiries.
- George: I'll do my best to answer.
- Benjamin: You can have your meeting in the meeting room if you want.
- Levvi: Okay then, let's go Mr. George

George and Levvi left for the meeting room. It was small but tidy and luxurious...

- Levvi: Take a seat.
- George: Thank you, it seems that you are not satisfied with the protection program offered by our company?
- Levvi: No, that's not what I meant. I just want to make sure about it, as our security and protection as Jews is the most important issue for me.
- George: This program is one of the strongest protection programs; it seems that you have a phobia that makes you focus much on security and protection.
- Levvi: What do you mean?
- George: The protection of this district and building is something that I have never seen anywhere else before, ever.
- Levvi: We have been an oppressed nation throughout history, and I think my job is to protect these people as best as I can.
- George: So my mission will be to help you technically.

- Levvi: To help us! Why?
- George: I don't understand! I mean help you with the distinguished protection program, for which we shall sign the contract.
- Levvi: Sorry, but I've become used to the idea that all people hate us Jews.
- George: I'm a British Protestant Christian. Isn't Balfour, the British Protestant Christian, the one who gave you this country and this home?
- Levvi: This is our country, our land. No one gave it to us. And we must protect ourselves.
- George: It seems that you love debates very much; do you like frankness as well?
- Levvi: I love debates and I look forward to them, and I love frankness and wish you would be frank too.
- George: If you like frankness, as you say, then tell me, where are you from? You seem to be European?!
- Levvi: I'm from Israel.
- George: Were your parents born in Israel?
- Levvi: My parents are Austrian. They came to Israel in 1970, and I was born here in Israel, so I'm Israeli, though I have Austrian nationality.
- George: So you're an Austrian protecting Israel, and I'm a Brit offering you a protection program.
- Levvi: But I'm Jewish and you are Protestant!
- George: Is your father a Jew?
- Levvi: No, he was an atheist Christian, but Judaism comes from the mother not the father.
- George: Frankly, I came to Jerusalem for two reasons: first, the signing of the contract, and secondly, as I want to know about Judaism; perhaps I'll become a Jew. Do you mind talking more deeply with me about religion?
- Levvi: With pleasure, but you cannot become a Jew unless your mother is Jewish.
- George: How?
- Levvi: We are a chosen people, chosen by the Lord, ethnically and ideologically.
- George: Then you don't evangelize or call others to your religion?
- Levvi: Never, but we call upon others to serve the chosen people.
- George: Do you mean just being your servant!!
- Levvi: No service is free of charge.
- George: After signing the protection contract, the sum agreed upon will be given,

this is not a service! This is buying and selling.

- Levvi: If the director of your company was not a Jew, we wouldn’t have chosen your company to give us the protection.
- George: But Kach is secular!
- Levvi: But still a Jew, one of the chosen people. You, on the other hand, seem to be religious.

At this point in time the office boy knocked on the door, and Levvi asked George what he would like to drink...

- George: Water and coffee please... What about starting the subject from the beginning again?
- Levvi: Go ahead, you seem interested in the mother of all heavenly religions.
- George: Do you mean by the mother of heavenly religions the Jews, as the Jews, Christians and Muslims believe in Moses?
- Levvi: Yes, and all who came after this disagreed; so the Jews do not believe in Jesus, and the Christians do not believe in Muhammad.
- George: It can be said that Muslims believe in all the prophets, but the Jews do not believe in anyone except their prophet. Anyway, I want you to tell me clearly about the oldest religions existing now, can you help me?
- Levvi: You seem to be a scholar in religions, not in software! Go ahead.

George intended to face her and lure her to reveal to him everything she knew about Judaism. He did not want rhetoric or general information, only the truth…

- George: How do the Jews believe in the Lord? How do they describe Him and how do they know Him?
- Levvi: I don’t understand what you want. But the Lord is the Creator and the Provider.
- George: I have read many things about the characteristics of God, which have raised my doubts of what I have read in the Old Testament: “Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying: It grieves me that I have set up Saul to be king: “ and I have read in the book of Exodus: “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” Also, I have read in the Book of Numbers the words of God “Now go and strike Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey,” and many

other things. I wonder: does the Lord regret, forget and remember, and order to murder instead of being forgiving? What God is this?!

- Levvi: You seem to be a good reader, but a selective one. What you said is true, and many other things too. But is it only a characteristic of Judaism? Christianity has double the amount of such amazing passages.
- George: You're right, we have a lot. But as I am thinking of converting to Judaism, what about completing our talk about the doctrines of Judaism sometime in the future. I'd like to finish the subject of the agreement today and tomorrow, and after tomorrow is Saturday, and it is your day off.
- Levvi: Right; Saturday is the day of rest and worship, and we are ordered in the Ten Commandments to observe it; it is the day on which the Lord completed making the heavens and the earth, and then the Lord rested on Saturday.
- George: Rested?!
- Levvi: Yes rested! It seems that you have an allergy to some words regarding the Lord, and this is your problem.
- George: Perhaps. Anyhow, it is important that we finish our discussion about the contract within two days. I have started to feel tired today as I went straight from the airport to the company.
- Levvi: You can go and rest now, and we'll complete things in the evening, if you like.
- George: Does it bother you if we complete the work in the hotel after half past four?
- Levvi: Not at all, I'll come to the hotel at half past four.
- George: So we'll have lunch together, and you›ll probably be quieter and less harsh in dealing with me.
- Levy: I don›t understand what you mean?! You're on the offensive today. But I apologize if I have wronged you.
- George: I'm the one that should apologize if I was aggressive; those who are as beautiful as you shouldn›t feel that they are being attacked or offended.
- Levvi: These are kind words from you, but your former attack is dearer to me than the flirtation you are partaking in now... Then she smiled and said: I live only for the sake of the Lord.
- George: Before I go, I want to say goodbye to Benjamin.
- Levvi: With pleasure.

They went to Benjamin's office, who hurried to ask about their meeting.

- Benjamin: Were the discussions good and fruitful?
- Levvi: Excuse me, I have to get back to my work?
- Benjamin: No problem, Levvi, but George is our guest and must be honored.
- Levvi: Okay, goodbye.
- George: I agreed with Levvi that I would go to the hotel to rest for awhile, and she'll meet me at the hotel to complete the debate... Now I know why we need two days at least to sign the contract - she likes debates and becomes easily engrossed in them.
- Benjamin: It's a very good idea to complete the talks in the hotel, this can remove some of the formality.
- George: Yeah, but Levvi looks tough!
- Benjamin: Despite her difficult trait, she is kind and beautiful, and I'll tell her to be less obstinant and militant before meeting you today.
- George: Good. Please excuse me as I'm a little tired.
- Benjamin: No problem, our driver will take you to the hotel.

(3)

George arrived at the hotel at half past one. He went up to his room and lay on his bed, and quickly fell asleep. He didn't wake up until quarter past four. He quickly washed his face, and while he was changing his clothes the room phone rang. It was the receptionist who phoned him to tell him that there was a woman called Levvi waiting for him.

George went down quickly. He saw Levvi with her blond hair wearing informal modest clothes which looked like an evening dress. Levvi gave him a bright smile, demonstrating her picturesque beauty.

- George: You look more beautiful than you did in the morning!
- Levvi: Thank you.
- George: Let's go to the restaurant to eat, and we'll complete our conversation during lunch.

They chose an isolated table in the hotel and sat face to face. George called the waiter and they ordered their food and drinks.

- George: What about not talking about business while we're eating?
- Levvi: As you like.

- George: You’re so beautiful! Are you married?
- Levvi: No, not yet. I thought you were different from Kach.
- George: How?
- Levvi: You’re interested in religion and the Torah and the Bible, but Kach is only interested in money and women.
- George: Right, so then how are we similar?
- Levvi: I thought you neither liked money, nor were concerned with beauty.
- George: Who isn’t concerned with or does not like money and beauty?! I don’t get what you mean!
- Levvi: After you left, Benjamin told me about the purpose of having this meeting at the hotel.
- George: What do you mean?
- Levvi: You are like Kach, both of you want lust… and only lust.
- George: Interesting, explain more!
- Levvi: Don’t play dumb, I’m ready.

George intentionally looked stupid, showing that he did not understand the meaning of her words…

- George: I’m also ready to complete our discussion, but after finishing my lunch.
- Levvi: Good, but do you want to make it a hot debate?
- George: If you want.
- Levvi: I don’t like to refuse a request from Benjamin, so it’s up to you.
- George: What has Benjamin got to do with our debate?!
- Levvi: Let me spit it out... you men, all of you, are only interested in sex.
- George: It seems that I’m talking about something, and you are talking about something else!

George began to understand more and more, and started to link the words of Levvi and the words of Kach and Benjamin. When they went out of the restaurant, George turned to the park outside, saying:

- George: I’d prefer to sit in the hotel garden. Is it ok with you?
- Levvi: In the garden!! Are you sure?!
- George: This place seems to be comfortable, and really suitable.
- Levvi: Yes, it is comfortable, but all the people can see us. What’s going on, what do you want?
- George: I want to have a debate with you.

- Levvi: Are you manipulating me? I told you that Benjamin spoke to me, and I'm ready for you.
- George: Good, as I'm ready to start the debate too. Then he said: There has been a big misunderstanding on Benjamin's part. I'm not Kach!
- Levvi: Sorry, but I understood from Benjamin that you two were the same. So I prepared myself for you, as you see.
- George: Didn't you tell me that you do not like flattery, and that your life is only for the Lord!
- Levvi: I... I agreed to serve the Lord.
- George: To serve the Lord!! How?
- Levvi: The most important form of worship for the Lord is to serve the State of Israel, and serve God's chosen people.
- George: And you… sorry, but are you cheap? Haven't you any right to be true to yourself!?
- Levvi: As you have started to attack me, I'll speak frankly: women in Judaism have a different status; she's not treated like men and I don't like to talk about it. Is it possible to change the subject?
- George: I don't understand?! And I don't want to force you to talk about it, but you did tell me before that you like debates!
- Levvi: I love debating, but I'm afraid that you've misunderstood me... I hope that you understand me correctly.
- George: Okay.
- Levvi: The topic of sex and women in Judaism is very detailed. For example, the sex which is sound and normal is the sex that is meant only for the purpose of procreation, and that is between a man and his wife. But unfortunately, women are oppressed. They are treated as being insignificant, insane or animals. They are just for lust. It's stated in the Talmud: "The women are bags filled with feces"... Then she turned angrily, saying: Is that what you men want?! Do you only want to empty what you have in this bag?!
- George: Sorry for upsetting you, but I see that this is the worst form of discrimination and injustice. And I want us to complete the debate comfortably. What forces you to be like this?
- Levvi: Benjamin! And being obedient to him!
- George: I don't understand! What is the relation between what you have just said

and your absolute obedience to Benjamin?

- Levvi: Benjamin is my mother's husband.
- George: Your father!?
- Levvi: No, no! My father died in a terrorist bomb attack by a vile Muslim. My uncle inherited my mother; as it is stated in the Torah " the wife of the dead shall not marry outside unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him as wife."
- George: What?! Your uncle inherited your mother! Is she a commodity to be inherited?!
- Levvi: Yes, unfortunately she is forced to marry her husband's brother.
- George: Sorry, I know you aren't a liar, but I can't believe what you're saying! And I think that you're exaggerating in defaming the Torah, though you pretend to be a religious Jew.
- Levvi: Ah, I could say a lot more and I told you that I don't like talking about it, but you keep insisting! Then she sighed and looked down, saying: I was very keen not to say anything until now.
- George: Is there anything tougher than what you have said?!

Levvi's Beautiful eyes filled with tears, and she sighed, saying:

- Levvi: As you asked, unfortunately yes! The testimony of a hundred women is equivalent to the testimony of one man! The woman is a devilish object! She is lower than the man… It is stated in the Talmud: "A man should be careful not to pass between two women, nor between two dogs or between two pigs. Nor should two men permit to pass between them a woman or a dog, or a pig." I pray religiously and humbly to God every morning: "Blessed are You, O Lord, who created me according to Thy will," but the man says: "Blessed are You, O Lord, because you did not create me as an idol, a woman, or an ignoramus."

George was looking at the beautiful Levvi and her watery blue eyes, feeling pitiful for her; he felt pity in his heart for her, and his eyes couldn't stop looking at her. He also noticed how she was affected by what she was saying …

- George: I apologize to you... is it possible to change the subject; I'm very tired, and I'm sorry about upsetting you.
- Levvi: I told you the same at the beginning.
- George: But these things are not specific for Jewish women?
- Levvi: No, you are wrong. It is specific for only the Jewish woman, as the non-

Jewish woman has another status!! I hope you won’t get angry or upset about what I will say; women are mentioned in the Talmud, the Jews’ second book after the Torah, where it says: “The non-Jewish woman is nothing but a beast; so adultery with her isn’t a crime; because she is a descendant of animals.”

- George: What fanaticism is this! But I repeat that I’m not convinced with what you’re saying. I’ve read about Judaism, and parts of the Torah, and I think that you›re probably interpreting the Torah as you want.
- Levvi: I don›t know why I began to breathe a sigh of relief and started to voice my views with you, but let me clarify: We don›t read the Torah as you read the Bible.
- George: How do you read it then?
- Levvi: The Torah is a divine revelation, while the Talmud is the explanation of the Torah. So, it›s not right to try to understand the Torah without the Talmud; but I›d rather not bother you with that.
- George: So, who wrote the Talmud?
- Levvi: It was written by many writers over more than one thousand years. Why do you ask these questions?
- George: I›ve become very disturbed, and I sympathize with the status of women. And I’m sorry, I’m not convinced with what you›ve said about women.
- Levvi: The majority of what I quoted is from the Torah, do you want verses from the Talmud?! There are sixty-four books in the Talmud, would you like to hear something from them?
- George: If it doesn›t bother you, go ahead.
- Levvi: So hear some shocking facts... in one of the books of the Talmud: If a domestic dog jumped on a girl while she was cleaning and it entered its penis into her and they had sex, she isn’t considered impure. Also, she›s allowed to marry a rabbi and even a senior rabbi!! The Talmud identifies that the age of a girl who has the ability to have sex as being three years and one day!! It considers that at this age, the girl becomes fit to be the wife of a rabbi. The Talmud also identifies the age of the boy who is qualified for sexual intercourse to be nine years and one day, but some rabbis said eight years and one day. In another place, the Talmud says, «If a man has sexual contact with a girl who is younger than three years and one day, it is not considered a sexual act. As it is as if the man put his finger in the girl’s eye!!” and “If a boy under the age of nine years and one day has sex with an adult woman, it is not considered adultery, because it is as if he wounded her

with a stick of wood!” Also, the Talmud doesn’t consider sexual intercourse with animals to be adultery. So the perpetrator is not punished! And the woman who has sex with an animal is not considered an adulteress, and so she isn’t punished, but the animal is the one that would be punished! Also, the Talmud doesn’t consider sexual intercourse with a relaxant penis to be adultery, so the perpetrator won’t be punished!

- George: Stop, please. That is enough; I feel disgusted by this. But I have a question, and sorry again for being frank: are you religious, or are you malcontent with the Jewish religion?! And I repeat my apologies, but I don’t think that all of the Jews are like that!
- Levvi: Yes… not all Jews, as I said. There are secularists like your friend, Kach. They don’t care about the Torah or the Talmud, and there are so many different sects, but unfortunately we’re a very religious family and I’m religious, so I don’t know why I told you all that! I may be wrong. Perhaps I want to defend myself for being weak, or because I came to offer myself to you, so I feel that I have been insulted.
- George: I didn’t mean to insult you, this is not my nature. But what does Benjamin plan to achieve by sending you to me?
- Levvi: I don’t know exactly, all I understood was that he has set an amount with you and you haven’t paid him yet, and you won’t pay him before you enjoy my body.
- George: Your body is beautiful and wonderful, and how I wish I could enjoy it, but... I’m married and I respect my principles. And maybe I am more strict than I should be. Sorry, but Benjamin misunderstood me, I didn’t tell him anything like that, and it doesn’t fit me to say something like that either.
- Levvi: Unfortunately, I’m a commodity...The tears filled her eyes and she didn’t restrain herself, so she cried: Maybe he understood that you’re like Kach.
- George: Tell me, please…What is the relation with Kach regarding what happened?
- Levvi: Every time that Kach came, he spoke to Benjamin and then I spent a night or two with him. Kach is a Jew; therefore, contracts, money and women are all for him. So, Kach’s representative must be treated as we treat Kach. How humiliated I feel now!

George did not know what to say while seeing Levvi’s tears rolling down

her face, so he stopped talking and just looked at her scenic beauty and pitiful tears. He felt sorry for her but, at the same time, he really desired her, and he felt guilty because he was the one who made her say such words which were rough and painful for a woman like her ...

- George: Wipe your tears, Levvi... I'm so sorry; I'll never speak about this again. What do you think of a cup of coffee?
- Levvi: Don't apologize... you did nothing wrong.

They went to the hotel's café. George intended to change the topic of the conversation and to ignore his physical desire.

- George: What are your doubts regarding the signing of the protection contract with our company?
- Levvi: I don't have any doubts.
- George: I was asked to come from Britain in order to answer your questions.
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! The truth is that you came here to bring Benjamin's sum. If you have the sum and hand it over to Benjamin, consider the contract signed.
- George: The sum is indeed with me. Should I give it to you or to Benjamin?
- Levvi: Give it to Benjamin... Then she smiled sadly: …You still work for Benjamin and Kach, even if it's against your principles!
- George: Unfortunately, what you are saying is true; we should compete with our product, not with bribery.
- Levvi: So, Judaism isn't worse than Christianity!?
- George: Maybe, and because you have been so honest with me, let me tell you the truth.
- Levvi: What truth?!
- George: I'm on a journey searching for happiness after suffering from worry and trouble because I couldn't answer my major questions. So, I began to look into religions. Now, I'm investigating Judaism, and it will be followed by Christianity, which will be followed by Islam.
- Levvi: Happiness is a wonderful word, but it seems that it's just for men in Judaism. Oh how I wish I were a man!
- George: Didn't you become religious to gain happiness?
- Levvi: Yes, but it may only be the happiness of the Hereafter.
- George: Then, why don't you change your religion?
- Levvi: Judaism is better than Christianity and Islam, as Judaism is the oldest

religion, and its people are the chosen people; and all I have said was to relieve myself after feeling insulted. Sorry, but don't you feel insulted when you pay a bribe that violates your principles.

- George: Yes, life often turns us into tools which people play with, ha ha ha! But don't you see that all the players are Jews?!
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! This is normal; we are the chosen people…. and you want me to leave Judaism!
- George: Since your beauty has started to shine again, and since the contract and the agreement and its questions are okay, do you mind if we debate more on Judaism? We won't talk about the subject of women , I just want to know more about your great religion.

George's phone rang and the caller was Benjamin; he asked Levvi's permission to reply. Benjamin wanted to be reassured about George and his time with Levvi, and he asked how their meeting went?

- George: I'm fine, and Levvi is okay. We're still discussing our work.
- Benjamin: Oh I see! Ha ha ha! Haven't you finished yet?
- George: Not yet … I'm not sure if we'll finish today.
- Benjamin: You can complete today and tomorrow in the hotel, if you want. We're at your service.
- George: Okay, but I'd like to meet you tomorrow, if possible, as I have a check for you, and so we can sign the contract.
- Benjamin: Whenever you have finished with Levvi, I'm at your service.
- George: Thanks, I'll phone you to arrange the appointment.
- Benjamin: I'll be waiting for you. And I suggest that Levvi takes you on a tour tomorrow to the sacred city. Would you like that?
- George: Okay I'll arrange it with her...
- Benjamin: Okay, I'll leave you both. May the Lord bless you.

George ended the call and looked into Levvi's beautiful blue eyes.

- George: Benjamin wants to be reassured about the check.
- Levvi: And to be reassured that I carried out all that was required of me.
- George: He suggested a good proposal.
- Levvi: I don't think he comes with good suggestions, but what did he suggest?
- George: For you to take me out tomorrow on a tour to the holy places.
- Levvi: Beautiful... but strange, a good suggestion came from someone I didn't

expect.

- George: Now it is six o'clock, and if you want, we can complete our discussion about Judaism. And tomorrow I'll wait for you in the morning for us to take our tour to the Jewish sacred places.
- Levvi: Okay, fine with me. Then she smiled shyly: We'll go to visit the holy places and then if you want something else, it can be arranged today or tomorrow.
- George: Something else... I understand… you are a glamorous beauty, but I told you before that I'm married and my principles prevent me.
- Levvi: To be more frank, religious Christians who are married are the very ones who don't mind such things.
- George: Yes, unfortunately you're right, but I believe it's not befitting to do such things. It is a betrayal of my wife and our contract of marriage. I wouldn't accept this act from her, so how could I do it?
- Levvi: Without any flattery, you are a wonderful man, and I'm very grateful to you.

They continued looking into each other's eyes with the clear admiration they had for each other. George didn't realize at first but his hand held her soft hand and as soon as he noticed, he withdrew it in embarrassment…

- George: Thank you, but I don't think I have done anything to deserve such words. And I look forward to our trip tomorrow.
- Levvi: Okay, let's complete our discussion now.
- George: Yes, I'd like to know more about the Torah and the Talmud.
- Levvi: As I told you before, we say that the Torah is from Allah, while the Talmud is the explanation, the clarification and the laws of the Torah that were passed down orally before being actually written down.
- George: This means that the Talmud consists of the words of human beings!
- Levvi: Yes, but the Torah cannot be understood without the Talmud, as we are not like the Christians, as I told you before.
- George: Why don't you return directly to God's words which are found in the Torah?
- Levvi: I've promised to be honest with you. Should I turn to the Torah even if the Torah has a lot of doubts, and perhaps you saw the Torah's verses about women?
- George: How can the word of God be problematic? I don't understand!
- Levvi: Unfortunately, we say that it is from God, but there is evidence that it has

been distorted.

- George: Evidences of distortion?! Where is the original version?
- Levvi: The original Torah is missing, and three different versions are used. Some of them are redundant and have contradictory sentences, like the Greek version. It's the version that was used by the Christians until the fifteenth century. At the time they said that the Hebrew version had been distorted. The Greek Church still considers it correct today, as well as the churches of the Orient. And then there is the Hebrew version; which is used by the Jews and Protestants. The Hebrew version includes 39 Ecclesiastes. There was a consensus among the Christians on the soundness and the accuracy of the Greek version until the fifteenth century, and that the Hebrew version was deliberately distorted by the Jews in 130 AD in order to place doubt concerning the validity of the Greek version which was adopted by the Christians at the time. In addition, the distortion targeted both the Christians and the Jews of Samaria. But after the emergence of the Protestants in the sixteenth century, the situation changed; the Protestants saw that the Hebrew Version was correct but the Greek Version had been distorted. Finally, there's the Samaritan version. The Samaria is a Jewish sect that lived on the mountains of Nablus. This version contains only seven books of the Old Testament. The Samaria considered what was more than that as being a forged increase. But it had sentences and paragraphs which were not found in the rest of the copies. Some Protestant investigators see this copy to be inferior to the Hebrew version, however, they resort to it in some issues and prefer it to the Hebrew Version.
- George: What a wondrous chronology and provoking contradiction. But what are the signs of this distortion... other than the subject of women and sex?
- Levvi: There are lots!! Among them is what we mentioned in the morning regarding the description of God with what is not suitable for Him, and attributing immorality and deficiencies to prophets, and…
- George: Sorry for interrupting you; immorality and deficiencies of prophets?!
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! Just imagine, this is the first time in my life I have said things like this. In fact I'm very surprised about myself, but I feel happy that I am actually saying these things. I wonder, is this a kind of release of emotions, or a whisper from Satan? I don't know, but I'm happy to say these things. Let me give you some examples: the Torah describes God's prophet Noah, peace be upon him, as drinking alcohol and taking off his clothes; it says, " And Noah began to till

the soil, and planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunk; and he was uncovered within his tent. " Also, it mentions about Lot, peace be upon him: "And he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man on the earth to come in unto us And the firstborn said unto the younger, 'Our father is old, and there is not a man on the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve descendants of our father.'…Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab, ….And the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Benammi." And there are many other examples, but I think these two examples are enough.

- George: Sorry Levvi, but why are you back to issues of sex, after we had left it?
- Levvi: Because I promised myself to be honest with you, and you are the one who asked me.
- George: I'd like to talk about another topic.

Levvi smiled, her cheeks shyly blushing, and she seemed to be even more beautiful and glamorous…

- Levvi: Ha ha ha! With pleasure, but I hope you don't turn your questions to sex and women.

George asked her not to talk about issues of sex only in order to stop his eyes from wandering over her body and on the beauty of the tender woman sitting in front of him. He didn't want to succumb to his body's whims, which began to feel crazy with desire and extremely thirsty to quench his thirst with the charming beauty which he viewed in front of him. Then he became afraid of betraying Katrina and his principles. What a difficult and silly life! Next he remembered the famous words of Adam: "Happiness is in simplicity," while murmuring to himself: "If only I could live with my principles simply." Then he tried to change the subject…

- George: You told me you're from Austria.
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! No, I told you I'm from Israel.
- George: Yes, I mean that your parents are from Austria. Let me say, according to British statistics, the ratio of Jews here in 1945 was 38%, the percentage of Muslims was 58%, and that of Christians was 8%.That high percentage of the Jews was due to the migration of 50,000 to 60,000 during the period from 1920 to

1945. Why do you think that the Christians and Muslims are the terrorists while you are the ones who came to them and occupied their land?!

- Levvi: No, sorry….. but you, the British, are the occupiers and you are the ones who gave us our land and brought back our rights.
- George: Why did Britain “bring back your rights,” as you said. Was it a free service just for you?
- Levvi: What concerns me is that this is our land and it was returned to us. As for why did Britain help us, this question is for you and not for me... although the UK and Europe have served us a lot, they have also killed many of us, don’t you know that?
- George: Do you mean the Holocaust?!
- Levvi: We’ve been a persecuted people throughout history, and the Holocaust was just the closing episode of the unethical persecution against us.
- George: Yesterday, the night before I came here, my Catholic wife told me about the Jewish persecution of the Christians. All the world’s peoples feel persecuted.
- Levvi: True…even the barbarian terrorist Muslims who killed my father say that they are oppressed, but history and facts offer you the truth.
- George: You said that you love to debate and that you never get upset if people are straight forward and to the point. Don’t you think that the Muslims are being oppressed, occupied, expelled from their country, killed and displaced!?
- Levvi: Terrorists deserve this and even more, but who is to blame for this? You are, so don’t criticize us.
- George: You’ve become offensive. Yes, we are to blame for this, and we did it for you. But don’t you see that they are oppressed?
- Levvi: I told you they deserve it and more; they are barbarians, backward, brutal and terrorists…
- George: But don’t you see that the Christians in Palestine are also persecuted, not only the Muslims!
- Levvi: You mean Israel not Palestine.
- George: Yes, don’t you see that Christians in Israel are oppressed by the Jews!
- Levvi: Don’t get angry, Christians can go anywhere in Europe or America if they don’t like the way we treat them!!
- George: Ha ha ha! These critical and harsh words are contrary to your beauty. I can’t imagine that such a beautiful and kind lady says such harsh words!

- Levvi: Those who aren’t willing to serve us don’t wait for anything from us but murder. These are the teachings of the Bible.
- George: Are these the teachings of the Bible?!!
- Levvi: Yes, we have in the Torah: “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’” Also we have: “And to the others he said in my hearing, ‘Go you after him through the city, and kill: let not your eye spare, neither have you pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maidens, and little children, and women.’” In addition, we have: “Now go and strike Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.” Are these texts enough, or do you want more?
- George: It seems as though I have started to annoy you. Calm down... but this is an unbearable form of terrorism.
- Levvi: I’m calm. And what I told you are the words of God found in the Torah. They aren’t my words!
- George called the waiter, and ordered an orange juice...Then he turned to Levvi, who was trying to hide her tension and her emotions…
- George: Can I get you anything, to make you calmer?
- Levvi: Lemon juice, please.

George stopped talking for a while as he was looking at Levvi’s face. She was sighing. He was contemplating the contrast between the delicate beauty and the murder, displacement and lack of compassion she was talking about. Levvi looked down, and then lifted her head, crying…

- Levvi: My father was killed and I became a toy in Benjamin’s hand. All this is due to us being persecuted throughout history. After that you want me to believe that these terrorists are the ones who are oppressed?!
- George: Please, drink the lemon juice and leave this issue if it is annoying you…
- Levvi: It doesn’t bother me, and you can continue. I’ll be quiet and listen.
- George: Frankly, are you convinced with the texts of the Torah that you mentioned?
- Levvi: Honestly… honestly, no.
- George: Why?
- Levvi: Didn’t I tell you that the Torah is full of distortions. This cruelty cannot be

from the Merciful Lord!

- George: You're right. The Lord is merciful to His slaves.
- Levvi: And returning to sex and women, hear this Torah text: " Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. " Then she smiled again, saying: Hear this text as well: " Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, 'Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come you out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin..'" Then she laughed sarcastically, saying: We have left the topics about sex and women, and now there is murder and kidnapping - or do you want to leave that subject also?
- George: Amazing! I can't believe what I'm hearing! Okay, let's leave this subject too. But excuse me, who are the daughters of Shiloh? And who is Shiloh?
- Levvi: Shiloh is the Christ, or the Messiah according to one of our interpretations. It's important to point out that those women are the non-Jewish women, like your women and the Muslim women. Sorry, but you are the one who provoked me, so I lost my temper.
- George: Okay, I think it's getting late now, so I'll invite you to supper to calm you down.
- Levvi: Oh... I lost track of time. Now it's nine in the evening. If this is an order I'll stay, but if it isn't, I wish to leave, if you'll allow me.
- George: I don't like this type of talking. I've not come here to command you. I've told you that I like how you are so explicit, and have greatly benefited from you on my path to happiness, and I would like to sit with you...when you agree to meet me.
- Levvi: Thank you for your kindness. See you tomorrow, then.
- George: But we agreed to meet on Saturday, the day after tomorrow.
- Levvi: Our visit to the Jewish holy places will be the day after tomorrow, but we can complete our discussion tomorrow, if you like?
- George: I'll meet you tomorrow when I come to meet Benjamin in the morning, but I'd like to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of Mary, if it is possible for you to bring me there.
- Levvi: The Church of the Resurrection is not a Protestant church, and you say that

you are a Protestant...Then she said, flirtatiously: Are you deceiving me?

- George: Why? I am going to visit it because I promised my Catholic wife to visit it.
- Levvi: You love your wife so much. I'll send you the driver at eight in the morning to drive you to the office to meet Benjamin. And try to get out early to be able to see the two churches, as tomorrow is Friday.
- George: What does Friday mean?
- Levvi: That there will be barriers and inspection points everywhere to prevent the terrorists from laying bombs when they go to perform their Friday Prayer.
- George: I'll be ready at eight o'clock to go to the office.
- Then he stood up and shook hands with Levvi, looking into her eyes saying:
- George: I am grateful to you, and sorry for upsetting you.
- Levvi: I'm the one that should be grateful for your generosity, your kindness, your frankness, and your loyalty to your wife and your principles.
- George: You are wonderful.
- Levvi: I wish if I could travel with you on your path to happiness, but my circumstances won't allow me.
- George: Who knows? Nothing is impossible... I'll meet you in the morning, beauty.

George ate his dinner quickly after Levvi had left. Her image didn't leave his mind. He felt as if she was near him, but he didn't know why. Was this due to her glamorous beauty, or her frankness with him? Or was it because he sympathized with her? He felt puzzled. He remembered her smile and her tears. He recalled her anger and her temper. All these were present in his mind. He felt sorry for her. She was a victim of distorted and unfair teachings. How could this poor woman face all this injustice and infringement on her rights in the name of the Lord!?

He went up to his room and turned on the TV, trying to forget Levvi and her exquisiteness, and in order to see the news. The news about the terrorist bombing in London had declined, but he saw and heard in the news that the party responsible for the bombing was a Seta dissident movement. The suspected Pakistani was arrested. He was frightened and found hiding in one of the areas on the outskirts of London, but he was released after he had proved his innocence. He said to himself: "Your innocence was proven. God looked after

you." Then the news said that the Israeli government was preparing for Friday. They prevented those under fifty years of age from performing the prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque, in anticipation of any terrorist bombing. He switched the TV off to open his e-mail and respond to his incoming e-mail, and then he decided to write some excerpts of the Torah that Levvi had told him to send them to Tom and Adam. After having finished typing them, he sent the text. It was eleven o'clock, so he went to bed. But Levvi's image had still not disappeared from his mind. He wondered: "Was it a mistake that she didn't sleep with me tonight!? It would have been a good and enjoyable night if I had agreed. She was ready and she has done this before with Kach. What are these principles that prevent us from the pleasures of life?!" He didn't know why he remembered his jealousy and anger when he imagined that Katrina had betrayed him with Tom; then he mumbled: "What is this contradiction that I live in?! I myself wanted to be unfaithful, the same form of unfaithfulness that is making me angry now. I pay bribes and I see that the one who receives it has no morals or principles. I wish that my spirit, my thought, my life, my happiness and my principles could be upright…"

(4)

George made sure to have his breakfast early, before eight o'clock in the morning, to ensure he would be ready for his lift to the airport. He went up to his room to wait for the driver, and at eight a.m. sharp the receptionist phoned telling him that there was someone waiting for him at the reception. He immediately went down and was surprised to see that it was Levvi, not the driver. He was happy to see her, so he smiled and they shook hands…

- George: It's so nice to see you; I didn't want to exhaust you.
- Levvi: It's really no problem... I like your discussions very much.
- George: Thank you for your compliment, your mannerly way and you politeness. Is Benjamin at the office now?
- Levvi: Yes and he's waiting for you there because I told him that you would be coming.
- George: Thanks, as I forgot to call him.

She gave him a friendly smile which made her entire face shine.

- Levvi: After leaving you and before arriving home, Benjamin kept calling me to make sure that I had spent the night with you. He didn’t believe that you’re not like Kach and did’t want me. So I told him that you’d come in the morning so he could make sure for himself.

He looked at her firmly, and said seriously:

- George: Who said I don’t want you?!

Levvi became confused, so the conflict of her feelings, ideas, opinions and her lust appeared on her face.

- Levvi: What do you mean? Did anything change since I left you last?
- George: Ha ha ha! I want your culture, your knowledge, your intelligence, your spirit, your morals and your politeness. As for your body, it is a jewel that I wish I could contemplate; it’s like a flower that I’d like to smell; but it’s a shame to think of a woman as only a body. I wouldn’t like to lose you or to lose my principles.

She wiped her forehead with her left hand, raising a tress of her hair in a turbulent manner which reflected her troubled soul.

- Levvi: Ah… I don’t know why I felt scared.
- George: Did you tell him that we’re going to visit the sacred places, according to his proposal?
- Levvi: No, tell him yourself.
- George: In fact, I feel uncomfortable with Benjamin. I feel humiliated that I have to give up my principles and pay him the bribe. But I didn’t really consider this issue before coming here, otherwise I would’ve refused. Anyway, we must finalize the topic now and after my return, we’ll see what we will do.
- Levvi: If you don’t give him the amount, he’ll understand that I didn’t perform my job well.
- George: How trivial is the life in which man waives his principles for the sake of money, sex or for position!
- Levvi: Maybe I’m contradictory, but if people hadn’t waived their principles for money, sex and position, Israel wouldn’t have been founded and wouldn’t have remained.
- George: How worthless life is, and how worthless I am for being involved with paying a bribe. I don’t know how I didn’t think about this matter when Kach told me!
- Levvi: Anyway, this is the company. We’ve arrived. The contracts are with Benjamin and ready to be signed.

- George: I hope I'll finish quickly. After that, I'll need a driver to take me on the tour to the churches.
- Levvi: Sorry... I can't take you to the churches myself, but you'll find the driver waiting for you.

George and Levvi arrived at Benjamin's office, who welcomed George and shook hands, smiling…

- Benjamin: How was your day yesterday? And how was your night?
- George: It was an eventful day in which I and Levvi finished lots of work.
- Benjamin: Yes... Levvi told me that you're ready to sign the contracts, and you have answered all her technical fears. Then he turned to Levy, saying: You can finish your work now so that I can finish signing the contracts with George.
- Levvi: I'll go, as I have some work to do... Then she turned to George: When you're finish, you'll find the driver waiting for you.
- Benjamin: Why the driver? You can take him, Levvi? Didn't she suit you? Didn't you like her?
- George: We've decided to do as you suggested and take a tour together to the holy places tomorrow, but today I'll go on a tour to the holy churches by myself.
- Benjamin: How was Levvi with you yesterday?
- George: Fantastic.
- Benjamin: I was amazed when I called Levvi at half past nine last night and she told me that she was near her home. You should've taken your time with her, as long as she was wonderful.
- George: We finished our discussions at nine, and then she left. I told you on the phone that I wanted to meet you to sign the contracts and finish the matter. Here, please take this check from Kach.
- Benjamin: Thank you, and thank Kach. The contracts are ready to be signed.
- George: Have we finished?
- Benjamin: We finished the contracts, but there are still three days for you to spend with us. Levvi and I are at your service.
- George: Thank you for your generosity.
- Benjamin: If you want Levvi to come with you to the hotel after the end of your tour tomorrow to spend the night with you, she'll be willing to entertain you.
- George: I think I'll be tired and want to rest and sleep early, I won't be able to wait up.

- Benjamin: Ha ha ha. Try Levvi, she'll relieve you. Every time Kach came here to sign the contracts, he didn't feel relieved until Levvi relieved him.
- George: Now that we've signed the contracts and finished. Is it ok if we talk about something else?
- Benjamin: Go ahead…
- George: I'll say it frankly and without any embarrassment: Why do you take money in order to sign the contracts? Isn't it financial bribery?
- Benjamin: Ha ha ha! If you like frankness; why do you and Kach enjoy Levvi's body in order to sign contracts?! Isn't it sexual bribery?!
- George: Yes, it is sexual bribery, and that's why I refused to do it.
- Benjamin: Kach didn't refuse, in fact he clearly and explicitly requested it, and you hinted that yesterday. If you didn't enjoy Levvi as you wanted, that's your problem. And if it's bribery, why did you pay me?!
- George: Your words seem to be true and logical. Why did I pay it when it is a bribe? Anyway, do money and sex make you happy?
- Benjamin: Undoubtedly, happiness in this world is represented in sex, money and power... Then he sighed, saying: … even if these pleasures themselves bring us misery.
- George: What do you mean? How are they the pleasures of life while they bring misery?!
- Benjamin: These are the contradictions of life, my friend. Sex, money and power are the most enjoyable things of the physical side of life, but they sometimes tyrannize us and make us unhappy. Exactly like our sad feasts which are far from being joyful or pleasurable. Isn't the feast supposed to be the happiest day for the people? My answer is of course yes, but our feasts are considered as being a sad day for us.
- George: How?
- Benjamin: Levvi can answer you better than me... Ha ha ha! She is more beautiful as well. You can complete the discussion with her at your hotel, and in a way that relaxes you.
- George: Like I said before, no thank you. I'll meet Levvi only to have discussions with her.

George left Benjamin's office and asked his secretary where Levvi's office was, and then went to her office. Once he entered the office, Levvi hastened to

ask him eagerly:

- Levvi: What did you two talk about?
- George: I feel so humiliated. I gave him the bribe and then we signed the contract.
- Levvi: Did you speak with him about the bribe or about me?
- George: Yes, we talked about you a lot. Sorry, he kept on offering me your body. Then he smiled, saying that I should consult you about certain topics.
- Levvi: Consult me? About what?!
- George: When I talked to him about the bribe, he embarrassed me by saying that Kach and I also use bribery, but a sexual bribe and not a financial one. Also, he embarrassed me by saying that I'm the one who paid the bribe and he is the one who took it. So both of us are alike.
- Levvi: Unfortunately a person sometimes has the ability to debate and to justify his mistakes.
- George: Who do you mean?!
- Levvi: I mean, Benjamin… She kept silent for a moment, then she said: …I also mean myself and, sorry, I mean you as well.

George looked at the roof sadly, and then he said:

- George: You're right. When will our attitude be aimed at our happiness and progress, instead of the attitude of sin and bribery?
- Levvi: But you didn't tell me what you wanted to know?
- George: Benjamin said: "This is the nature of life; life is complex as its happiness and pleasures are what grieve our souls, the same as our feasts that are supposed to be happy are sad."
- Levvi: Perhaps one of the manifestations of distortion that we talked about previously is that the Jewish religion is a complex religion. The problem isn't with your understanding - but the problem is that Judaism has a truly complex nature. Anyhow, the Jewish feasts are not for delight, but are mostly for grief.
- George: How?
- Levvi: Our feasts are dedicated to worship. The Jewish worship is the worship of weeping and sorrow. Haven't you heard about the Wailing Wall?! But during the most important feast for us, called the Day of Atonement, we fast for more than 24 hours of the day and night when we don't do any work, only worship. Generally, we have many feasts; however, the majority of the Jews, especially the secularists, see the feasts as holidays and joyous occasions without any particular

form of worship involved, only the formal acts.

- George: This is not very important. What is important is can life be so complex that we find happiness only in what grieves us?
- Levvi: I am sorry to say that I often ask myself the same question, but I can never find an answer, despite my deep knowledge of the Torah and the Talmud. Perhaps it's due to the nature of the complicated psychology of Judaism or the Jewish religion, or perhaps I have to be more knowledgeable in order to find the answer.
- George: I do not know... but I hate complexity, as I think that it brings nothing but misery.
- Levvi: I hate complexity, but I live in it. Anyway, you are late for Dr Habib. It's now nine o'clock and the time is not in your favor. He's waiting for you outside.
- George: Who is Dr Habib?
- Levvi: He is a scholar of religions, a Catholic Christian...I've chosen him myself; I think he's the best person for you to go with.

George kept silent for a few moments; he did not want to leave her. He tried to take in all her beauty, the locks of her hair hanging down over her shoulder, her vibrant eyes, her bright mouth, her tender and soft body, and her charming movements. He tried to enjoy every part of her. He asked himself: "Did I make a mistake when I refused to spend the night with her to quench the thirst of my body? Was Benjamin true when he said that the pleasures of the flesh grieve the spirit? Oh, I forgot to discuss this point with her."

Levvi was aware that he was looking at every part of her body. She didn't know why she felt such pleasure from these glances. Did she want to enjoy herself with him? Then, why did she abstain? Or did she abstain in order to make him run after her? But in reality he didn't run after here. And why did he abstain when his looks were devouring her? Had he changed his mind? Should she offer to spend the night with him, or what should she do?!!

- George: I am thankful and grateful to you. I'll be waiting for you tomorrow morning at eight o'clock.
- Levvi: Thanks, George.

George left and welcomed Dr. Habib. Then he went with him to his car.

- Habib: Firstly, we're heading to the Church of the Resurrection. Today is Friday and there are strict procedures everywhere. So it may take us two hours to get there.

- George: Two hours?!
- Habib: Unfortunately, yes. The road usually takes forty-five minutes, but today is Friday and all the roads are closed as there are a lot of checkpoints.
- George: Although it will take longer and be tiring, it's worth it. Terrorism is a disaster for humanity.
- Habib: What terrorism are you talking about?
- George: The terrorism of the Arab Muslims.
- Habib: Excuse me, I'm a Catholic Christian Arab and not a Muslim, but the real terrorism is the terrorism of the Jewish state. Why do they prevent people from praying at their mosque? Where is the terrorism in praying in a mosque?
- George: Sorry, I'm not an expert in history or in politics or religions, and it seems that I'm debating a specialist. But aren't Muslims the ones who blow themselves up and blow up trains and buses to kill Jews?!
- Habib: You're right, they do this. But may I ask you, what makes a man kill himself?
- George: Out of my experience, I imagine that man kills himself only if he reaches a case in which his death becomes better than his life.
- Habib: And what has brought the Muslims to this state here?
- George: I don't know. What has brought them to this state? You tell me.
- Habib: Injustice, oppression, occupation and humiliation.
- George: You seem to be greatly sympathetic with Muslims.
- Habib: Not at all! I'm not a Muslim, but I'm sympathetic with the country's inhabitants, the Muslims and the Christians, whose dignity has been lost and who have been robbed of their land and their rights. Imagine if we, the Christians, had been expelled and abandoned from Palestine and our holy places had also been insulted.
- George: But you weren't hurt as much as the Muslims.
- Habib: We are a minority here. Although we have been offended, their dealings with us are better than their dealings with the Muslims; out of respect to the Christians around the world.
- George: Why aren't the Muslims treated better, out of respect to the Muslims around the world?!
- Habib: To be clear and straight to the point: We live in a world that doesn't respect anything but power.. and only power... let's change the topic. Do you know the

Church of the Holy Sepulcher?

- George: Yes, to some extent. I’ve read much about it.
- Habib: Though you’re a Protestant, as Levvi told me.
- George: Yes. It seems that Levvi has told you everything.
- Habib: I’ve known Levvi for about five years, and I haven’t seen her as interested in anyone as she is with you.
- George: I only met Levvi yesterday, but this feeling she has is due to her good manners. As for you: how did you come to know her?
- Habib: She came to me being tired of Judaism, and she was thinking of converting to Christianity. So she came to debate with me about Catholicism - she likes debating very much.
- George: Did she convert to Christianity?
- Habib: Definitely not. She wasn’t convinced with Catholicism or with Judaism, though she’s very religious. She is also from a religious family, so if she converts to Christianity, she would be killed or imprisoned, or punished with some serious penalty.
- George: Why didn’t you convince her about Catholicism?
- Habib: Perhaps it’s due to its contradictions, and perhaps due to the complex Jewish nature!
- George: Or perhaps, due to the complex Catholic nature.
- Habib: Ha ha ha! Maybe.
- George: Levvi told me that you’re a researcher in the affairs of religions.
- Habib: Yes...I’m a university professor and teach the history of religions.
- George: Could you tell me about the history of religions in Palestine then?
- Habib: The topic is very simple, despite its political and religious complexities.
- George: I adore simplicity... tell me about it simply, if you can.
- Habib: Simply...there is no doubt that this land was inhabited before all religions, and that all religions have passed through this Holy Land, and that Judaism preceded Christianity and Islam. There were inhabitants before all religions, and all religions came to this Holy Land and mixed with it so they became a part of this land. They didn’t confiscate what preceded them, but coexisted with them. But, in the modern era when the Jews came, they wanted to be the only inhabitants here and wanted to cancel all that had preceded them, and kill the inhabitants or push them out.

- George: But didn't the Muslims expel those who preceded them?
- Habib: Not at all! The truth should be told. Our churches were present before the entry of 'Omar bin Khattab, and they weren't harmed.
- George: What about the Crusades?
- Habib: Wars between two religions and wars between the indigenous populations, made-up of the Muslims along with some of the Christians on one side and the Crusaders who arrived from Europe on the other side. But the people lived in harmony before the arrival of the Crusaders from Europe.
- George: And didn't the Christians persecute the Jews?
- Habib: Although I'm a Christian, in the modern time the Jews were persecuted in Europe, not in Palestine. This country is the country of tolerance. In the past the Roman state killed the Jews and allowed them to be killed after the mission of Jesus, and after he was denied by the Jews.
- George: It seems that being an Arab makes you feel more sympathetic to the Muslims than the Christians, as Islam is the religion of the Arabs!
- Habib: Maybe, but Islam is not the religion of the Arabs, and the majority of the Muslims are not Arabs. I'm an Arab but I'm not a Muslim. But I'm an academic person so I want my answers to be scientific. The Arabs arrived in Jerusalem before Islam. Isn't Abraham the father of Jacob, and Ismail? And he lived before Islam and Judaism?!
- George: Sorry for interrupting you… the neighborhoods here seem to be very old.
- Habib: Yes, because we've reached the old town where the Church of the Resurrection is. Didn't you notice that we passed more than fifteen checkpoints?
- George: How pitiful and sad it is to see the queues of the elderly at the checkpoints.
- Habib: Being a Christian and being known at the checkpoints, the officers helped us to pass quickly. As for the queues of the elderly, the people under fifty years of age are prohibited from performing the prayer today. So then, logically speaking, it should also be forbidden for us to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, if they apply this rule on us.
- George: The old town seems to be a treasure of memories and monuments of Christianity!
- Habib: Yes, and for the Muslims as well.
- George: And also for the Jews.

- Habib: They say that, but history and reality don't support this … Then he smiled and said: But power- the most important thing in the world in the jungle where we live- supports them.
- George: You are very prejudiced against the Jews.
- Habib: And facts point to the reality of what I have said, but I may be prejudiced as they occupied my land and deprived me of my freedom and my right to worship.
- George: Let's leave this point; as all religions make the same claim. I think we have arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, haven't we?
- Habib: Yes, you can see the domes and crosses here. We'll walk the rest of the way.
- George: Aren't you afraid of the Muslims?
- Habib: If you have survived the Jews, anything after that is easy. Have you ever heard of the Muslims killing the Christians in Jerusalem?

After walking a little together, they found the ancient building of the church in front of them. George was amazed with the building of church, so he started to look at it in detail…

- Habib: You'll be even more amazed when you enter it.
- George: So let's go in..

When George entered, he looked at large painting of Jesus, peace be upon him, while being crucified. The painting was carved on the wall, and below it was a large picture of the Virgin Mary, peace be upon her, and a picture of Joseph the Carpenter…

- George: I think that these images are suitable for the museums! But are such images befitting churches which are dedicated to worship?
- Habib: This is the nature of you Protestants. You don't like pictures in the churches...Then he smiled sarcastically and said: You're similar to the Muslims on that point.
- George: It's the first time I have been told that we're similar to the Muslims; you usually say that we're similar to the Jews.

George turned to a dome radiating a wide beam of light which divided into twelve rays, which he contemplated with admiration …

- Habib: This is one of the world's masterpieces. This ray which descends from the dome is from the sun that shines on the middle of the dome, and which comes through a hole which is at the top of the dome. From this, twelve rays emanate. This is a clear indication of Jesus, representing the dawning of a new day, and the twelve apostles: the radiation of faith over the earth. The dome was launched on the second of January, 1997.

- George: It's amazing. One can feel the spirituality of faith in such a sacred place.
- Habib: Though you, the Protestants, don't like this place much!
- George: Ha ha ha! Who doesn't like a place which has the plank on which the Christ was crucified?
- Habib: the Catholics and Orthodox Christians are more interested in this church.
- George: It was previously demolished by the Muslims! But you say that the Muslims didn't destroy any house of worship!
- Habib: You're right... It was demolished by Al Hakim Bi 'Amr Allah Fatimid who, according to history, demolished Islam just as he demolished Christianity. However, they allowed it to be built again forty years after it was demolished. I'm not a Muslim and I am not bothered about talking about the injustice of the Muslims, which has been repeated throughout history, but it can't be compared with the injustice done by the Jews, or, I'm sorry to say, the injustice of the Christians towards the Jews. By the way, the first church was built by a Syrian engineer, not a European, named Zenobius, in 336 AD.
- George: Strange, there aren't a large number of people in the church.
- Habib: Because the mass is performed on Sunday, as you know. Today is Friday and the roads are very difficult to pass. Otherwise, this is one of the most visited churches in the world, and one of the most sacred places.

George prayed in the church, fulfilling his promise to Katrina. Then he wandered through the church with Habib, who answered his questions and showed him the features of the church. After that they left to go to the Church of Mary. Habib looked at his watch. It was quarter to four…

- Habib: I hope we won't be too late as it takes between an hour and an hour and half to reach the Church of Mary, and the return will also need an hour to an hour and half. I hope we will arrive back before sunset.
- George: Good. Please excuse me, then, as I want to relax a little for half an hour in the car during the trip, because I feel a little fatigued.
- Habib: Okay, then relax.

George lay back on the seat and closed his eyes. He felt that the pace of the

events of this trip was not just fast, but very fast. He remembered that he had ended the first goal of his travel quickly, and also remembered his second goal which was to explore the path to happiness. He remembered his conversations with Levvi, Benjamin and Habib. All these events happened in just one and a half days. What would happen in the remaining two and a half days? He remembered Katrina, Tom and Adam. He wished that they could've come with him and heard his talks. He felt that the dose of information was too large for his head, to the point that he could no longer define his personal opinion about the information he had seen and heard. He remembered his questions and thanked the Lord that they no longer grieved him as they used to, though he hadn't forgotten them. Is this because he was on his way to the path to happiness? But the questions and the information of the path to happiness also exhausted him. While he was thinking on these ideas and conflicts, he moved to the world of dreams and fell asleep.

(5)

When George woke up, he sat up straight, looking at Habib.

- George: Sorry, it seems that I was tired.
- Habib: It seems so.
- George: Oh, I've slept for a full hour! When will we reach the church?
- Habib: In about a quarter of an hour...Then he continued smiling: You seem to have a deep internal conflict with Katrina, Benjamin, Tom, Adam, the old man, Michael, Jyotsna, Kach and Levvi…
- George: Where did you get these names?!
- Habib: You repeated them while you were sleeping.
- George: Apparently I was really tired. I am feeling the overlap of information and events in my head, and my body also feels heavy.
- Habib: If a person cannot be at peace with events in his life, they will interfere with his spirit and make him feel tired.
- George: Probably, as this is exactly my problem.
- Habib: By the way, I like the phrase you repeated often.
- George: What was it?
- Habib: The path to happiness. You kept repeating: "I want to find the path to happiness." A wonderful phrase.

- George: So then what about talking a bit about the path to happiness? I'd like to ask you a question or two.
- Habib: Go ahead.
- George: Are you happy?
- Habib: That's a very big question! Do you think I can answer it?!
- George: Yes, I think it's possible.
- Habib: All religions, ideas and doctrines claim this.
- George: You're a professor on the history of religions. Which religion is the nearest to happiness?
- Habib: This is the first time I've ever been asked such a big question...I've done my best to find the answer, but I'm still looking.
- George: In your opinion, is it possible for the path not to have a religion?
- Habib: Never, this is highly unlikely. Science proves that most atheists are psycho or mentally-ill patients, and that they are lying about their atheism.
- George: I don't understand... how are they lying about atheism?!
- Habib: I mean that they pretend to be atheists, but within themselves they believe in God. Atheism is, in fact, a means to escape from religion and its responsibilities... they have neither religion nor belief.
- George: If religion is the path to happiness, then why can't an academic researcher in religions answer me?
- Habib: You have a right to say that. I'm still looking, and I'll get the answer soon.
- George: Promise me you'll tell me when you get there.
- Habib: Okay, I promise you. You seem to be very interested in religions, just as Levvi described you.
- George: I don't like contradictions, and I don't like complications. I like compatibility between the mind, the soul and the body, and between principles and pleasure. Also, I love profound simplicity.
- Habib: Wonderful, me too. You seem to be a philosopher, we must complete our discussion, but it seems that we reached the Church of Mary Magdalene, which is in front of you.
- George: What a wonderful building!
- Habib: This is Russian architecture. It was built by the Russian, Alexander, with very magnificent golden domes on the Mount of Olives.
- George: Then, it's a modern church?

- Habib: Undoubtedly yes, when compared with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built in 335 AD, and the Church of the Virgin Mary was built in 1886 AD. So, there are more than 1500 years between them.
- George: I am surprised that many of the Christian landmarks were built a long time after the death of the early follows of Christianity. A matter that questions its sanctity!
- Habib: Sadly your words are 100% true, and even the Bible is the same. Now, we have arrived. We can complete our discussion on the way back. I hope we'll finish quickly so that we can return before sunset.
- George: Okay. So we should finish as soon as possible.

They took a quick tour of the church and what drew George's attention was the large number of images, especially on the ceiling of the church. George felt that they were unsuitable for a place of worship. Another marvel which caught his attention was the magnificent decorations and the seven domes where the sun shone brightly. The building was architecturally splendid, particularly the place where George prayed quickly to the Lord, and when he was done they left.

- George: It's a wonderful and beautiful building.
- Habib: Yes; it is a masterpiece of architectural art.
- George: But you, the Catholics, love images in places of worship. As for me, I see that they don't fit a place of worship, as it reminds me of the temples of the Gentiles.
- Habib: First, this church is actually not Catholic, but Orthodox. Second, I told you that you are similar to the Muslims on this point.
- George: It isn't a Catholic Church?! So why does my wife want me to pray here?!
- Habib: I don't know.
- George: Since you're a scholar of religions, could you tell me the difference between Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, from your point of view?
- Habib: It is a difficult and complex question.
- George: Don't you like simple matters? Simplify it for me.
- Habib: I'll try, but there are so many groups and sects. In order to simplify it, I'll only talk about the main three groups that you mentioned. Firstly, Orthodox means the right opinion, the truth, the well-known one or the one which adheres

strongly to religion or tradition. All of these definitions have a similar meaning. Catholicism, which means 'in general' or 'universal', broke away from it in 451 AC. The Protestantism sect emerged when it broke away from Catholicism, after the Movement of the Religious Reform led by Martin Luther that swept through Western Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries AC.

- George: So the Orthodox Church is the original one, not you, the Catholic Church.
- Habib: Yes, but from us sprung the Protestants. Ha ha ha! What is important is that the Orthodox name their church the Eastern Church, or the Greek Church, or the Church of the eastern Romans whose followers are from eastern Roman, i.e. from east Europe, such as Russia, the Balkan countries and Greece. The original center of the church was the city of Constantinople. This doctrine is followed by the Egyptian Church, the Armenians and the Ethiopians, and the followers of this doctrine are nearly one thousand million people.
- George: One thousand million people! Is that really possible?!
- Habib: While for Catholicism, their church is called the Western Church; referring to the Latin countries of Italy, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Brazil. It has followers in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia. They claim that their founder is the apostle Peter, the leader of the Disciples of Christ, and that the popes of Rome are his successors. It also claims to be the mother of the churches, and its instructor. It follows the papal system, being headed by the pope. The churches' compound has the right to issue papal decrees, which they see as divine decrees because the pope is the Successor of Peter, the disciple and the regent of Christ. Thus, he represents God; therefore his decree is not open for discussion or any disagreement. The followers of this doctrine are about one thousand million people too.
- George: Good. Please continue, what about Protestantism?
- Habib: Protestantism is called the Evangelical Church, meaning that the followers of that church follow the Bible and understand it by themselves, without being subject to any one else or another sect. They don't believe in the inspiration of the men of the church, though they are all Christians, because they believe in the fundamental beliefs. And they don't believe in many of the sacraments, the rituals, the prayers the church ordains, baptism, and traditions. They also rejected some of the books of the Bible, and many of the beliefs and the sacred traditions.
- George: You want to consider us as a group which is separate from Christianity

- no problem - but what are the fundamental differences between the three sects?

- Habib: You've mentioned the essence of the issue when you said: "You want to consider us as a group which is separate from Christianity." In fact the differences between the sects are so great that some of them consider them different religions, not one religion with different sects.
- George: How? Explain it to me?
- Habib: There are differences of opinion about all the doctrines of Christianity in all the sects. So I can't explain them in the car. They differ about God, Jesus, the Bible and the rites of worship, as well as many other things.
- George: How can it be that one religion has so many a differences? No doubt that one of them is right.
- Habib: The idea that one of them is right is the reason behind the wars between these sects.
- George: Wars?!
- Habib: Yes, wars in which millions have been annihilated. For example, the Thirty Year War between 1618 and 1648, between the Protestants and the Catholics, and also their corresponding allies. It cost the Europeans millions of casualties. Germany alone lost half of its men and its population declined from twenty million to thirteen and a half million!

The words were harsh for George to hear, as he hates terrorism and extremism of all forms. He wondered to himself: "Can the path to happiness be filled with blood? May the Lord have mercy on us! Humans cannot be happy with such brutality…"

- George: What brutality is this?!
- Habib: History has proven that severe ideological differences and discrepancies usually turn into conflicts, whether we like it or not.
- George: What a terrorist and annoying history!
- Habib: Unfortunately, yes. Generally, the clash of religions is tiring to hear about, starting with the Jewish war, their persecution of the Christians and the killing of Jesus - then, the Christians' persecution of the Jews, and then the Jews' persecution of the Muslims and the Christians.
- George: Again, you did not mention the Muslims' persecution of the Christians or the Jews.
- Habib: Because I don't know of any in history. Could you give me an example?

- George: The Muslims demolished the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
- Habib: There are many incidents like this, but I'm talking about the persecution and the killing of people and preventing them from performing the rituals of their worship. Islam forbade destroying monasteries and churches and forbade killing the Christians, and when anything like that happened, it never reached the state of being a general persecution.
- George: You seem to be a Muslim hiding in Christianity.
- Habib: Ha ha ha! Maybe, who knows? Perhaps I'll become a Muslim or a Protestant someday. Didn't I tell you that you are similar to them? Both of you don't like the statues and images in the places of worship. Then he turned to George saying: Or perhaps I'll walk with you on the path to happiness. You reminded me... what is the story behind the path to happiness?!
- George: The path to happiness.. It's a very long story.
- Habib: Simplify and shorten it for me.
- George: I just got very tired of life's major questions like, why were we created? Who created us? Why are we alive? And what will be our final abode? I knew that I would never be happy until I could answer these questions. So I began to search for the path to happiness. Then he smiled and said: The names you told me that you heard me say while I was sleeping, were persons who I have come across during my search for the path to happiness.
- Habib: Is your visiting the holy city and the debates part of your search for happiness?
- George: I actually came for a business visit, but the fact that encouraged me is what I said.
- Habib: And when will you give up this path?
- George: I don't know, but I'm determined to reach it. Then he smiled and turned to him saying: The path to happiness is itself a happy path.
- Habib: It seems that there is great similarity between you, Levvi and I.
- George: How?
- Habib: She came to me searching for happiness in other faiths beside Judaism, but she wasn't convinced with Catholicism. I was an Orthodox but I turned into a Catholic, and I'm still searching.
- George: Try Protestantism...perhaps, it's the solution. I always tell my Catholic wife that your sect is complex due to its numerous rituals and the illogical secrets.

- Habib: Perhaps, but are you now in your search for the path to happiness?
- George: Sorry, but how much longer will it be until we reach the hotel? I'm starting to feel sick, my body is heavy and I feel dizzy.
- Habib: Hopefully it is only something small, may the Lord bless you with good health. We'll arrive in about a quarter of an hour.
- George: I'm very grateful to you; I benefited a lot from our discussion.
- Habib: You should thank Levvi who introduced me to you. You should thank her as she is really keen to help you.
- George: Yes, Levvi is a very rare young lady, and I'm grateful to her.
- Habib: You seem to like her; didn't you tell me that you're married?
- George: Yes, I'm married, and Levvi's a pretty and wonderful woman, but despite her glamorous beauty and her overwhelming charms, I like her spirit more than her body.
- Habib: You seem to be a platonic lover!
- George: Ha ha ha! Or a complicated and unsound person, as I've been told by many who know me.
- Habib: In our materialistic communities, the body takes precedence over the spirit, in the way the body is worshipped and how its pleasures are pursued. This is the case with the majority of us, and perhaps it is more obvious among the Jews.
- George: How?
- Habib: One of the benefits of Christianity is the spiritual view of matters, but our materialistic communities focus on the pleasures of the body at the expense of the pleasures of the spirit. The history of the Jews proves that they have a materialistic outlook about everything, on God, the Last Day, morals and behavior. Everything can be bought and sold, and I don't mean just buying and selling with money.
- George: Didn't I tell you that you're prejudiced against the Jews?
- Habib: You can discuss it with Levvi; she's a glamorous Jew, and she won't be prejudiced against the Jews. And you can consider the history and also reality.
- George: You have challenged me again… have we arrived yet? I'm tired.
- Habib: We'll be there in a few minutes.

George's phone rang… It was Levvi with her beautiful voice.

- Levvi: Hello, George.
- George: Hello.

- Levvi: How was your tour?
- George: Wonderful! How can it not be while I'm in the company of the great Dr. Habib!
- Levvi: I hoped that my choice was good.
- George: It was perfect, thank you.
- Levvi: I wanted to see how you were before sunset and the beginning of Saturday.
- George: I'm fine, thank you for calling. And thank you for your arrangements. When will we meet tomorrow?
- Levvi: Whenever you want, as I would like to see you.
- George: I would like to see you too. Let's meet at nine o'clock, as I'm a little tired and I want to have a long rest.

George felt a little confused, so he looked at Habib with a puzzled face, who was trying to hide his smile.

- Levvi: May God make you well and take care of you. Do you need a doctor?
- George: No thanks Levvi. I'm grateful to you. You'll find me ready and fully active at nine o'clock tomorrow morning.
- Levvi: Goodbye.
- George: Goodbye…
- Habib: ... A warm call!!
- George: What do you mean?
- Habib: Nothing… Levvi is a wonderful, beautiful and a glamorous woman, as you say.
- George: What do you mean?
- Habib: I was joking with you. It seems that she admires you very much, just as you admire her. Both of you are trying to focus your admiration on the spirit, the thought and the morals of the other…Then he smiled and said: You both admire the other's body as well, so beware that you do not exceed your admiration of the spirit to act on your admiration of the body, or let anything happen which will make you both abandon your principles which Levvi has told me about. Anyhow, we have reached the hotel so you can leave.
- George: Thank you for your sincere and difficult advice. Why don't we have dinner or supper, as we haven't eaten dinner yet.
- Habib: You're tired and I'm also tired, so excuse me please, but I can't.
- George: Thank you, I've benefited a lot from our talks. This is my contact infor-

mation card; I hope that we'll be always in touch with each other. Tomorrow I'll be with Levvi the whole day, and there's no problem if you are a guard for us.

- Habib: I know that you are interested in culture, thought and principles, but I warn you, as I have already warned her, that things sometimes become mixed up. We are human beings and we have our human weakness. Thank you... I hope to see you before your departure... this is my card. Always tell me where you are on your journey on the path to happiness.

He went up to his room, feeling fatigued. First he took a shower, then, as usual, he switched the TV on and watched the news, that had nothing new. Next he turned his computer on to check his e-mail. He found a message from Adam, in which he said:

"Greetings George,

I saw what you sent me excerpts of the distorted Torah and I found them to be unbearable and unbelievable. Thank you for sending them, we shall discuss them after your return and I hope that you will continue to send such messages; as I benefit a lot from them."

Then he found a message from Tom, in which he said:

"Hello George,

Regarding the parts of the Torah, I told you before that all religions are of no benefit. I was about to change my mind because of you until I received this message. I think you started to be convinced with my words. Don't forget that the Christians believe in the Old Testament. Our appointment is on Tuesday at two o'clock in the evening, to discuss everything. If you have any other verses, send them to me."

George wanted to write to them about his experiences he had today, but he couldn't as he felt very fatigued, so he decided to write them a single brief message... After greeting and welcoming them, he wrote:

"I have read your replies and I'll try to tell you the latest as soon as it happens. Today was as eventful as yesterday. It was about the complexities of the religions, and the clash of religions and their persecution, in addition to the disputes of the Christian sects, as well as other matters. Being a little tired, I'll try to send you some of what I learned tomorrow. "

He switched the computer off and flung himself onto his bed, but he was surprised that despite being stressed and fatigued, Levvi's radiance, her bright smile and her blue eyes didn't leave his mind. He remembered the words of Habib that things sometimes become mixed up, but despite of his fear, he was sure of himself, and of Levvi as well.

Desires and principles

8

Desires and principles

Desires and principles

(1)

George woke up at 8:30 in the morning; his body was heavy and exhausted. The night before he had suffered from a raging fever and so asked for an analgesic and antipyretic from the hotel reception. He summoned up enough strength to stand and take a shower, and afterwards he felt more energetic. He went down to the restaurant, ate breakfast and took the fever reliever again, and so he felt better.

After he had finished breakfast, he went back up to his room again at 9:10 am. He heard his mobile ringing to find the anxious beautiful voice of Levvi:

- Levvi: Where were you? I was worried about you and called you more than once, but you didn't answer.
- George: Sorry, I went down to the restaurant to have breakfast and forgot my mobile in the room.
- Levvi: You aren't usually late.
- George: I didn't sleep well last night; I was feeling under the weather.
- Levvi: May God heal you; do you want me to give you a lift to the doctor?
- George: No thanks, sorry for being late. I am feeling better now.

George descended to the reception room and saw Levvi wearing decent covered clothes, but it didn't hide her charming beauty. He shook hands with her and welcomed her …she said anxiously:

- Levvi: I insist that you should see a doctor; it isn't advisable to not do anything about this.
- George: Thanks Levvi, but I'm better now. I would be grateful if we could go to visit the holy places.
- Levvi: As you like, I just want you to be okay. We can go to visit two or three places today, what do you think?
- George: I'd like to begin with the most important place, and it would be enough if we visited just two places, because I'm interested more in sitting and have a discussion with you, not just a visit.
- Levvi: So am I. So then we'll first go to the Wailing Wall and Mount Yoria, and then if there's time we will visit the tomb of the King David in Mount Zion and

the ancient tomb in the Mount of Olives.

- George: That's suitable. Hopefully we can finish our tour early before I get tired.
- Levvi: How was Habib with you?
- George: A very good choice, it seems that you understand me well.

Her eyes glittered, mouth pouted and face smiled…

- Levvi: Mmm… to some extent. Habib is cultured, aware and open-minded.
- George: You're right, I benefited from him very much.
- Levvi: He said the same about you.

With amazement, George asked:

- George: How and when?
- Levvi: He phoned me yesterday straight after he had left you in the hotel, and told me that he had benefited from you very much. He spoke very highly of you, unlike his description of anyone else before.
- George: He is being polite, as all the time I was tiring him by talking with him, and exchange views and opinions.
- Levvi: If it is like your discussion with me, how sweet it is!

George felt very happy while listening to her sweet words with her soft voice, captivating body and wonderful spirit.

- George: Ha ha ha! It is a little different. You're soft and beautiful, but he isn't. I thank you for your choice of him and also thank you for your concern, and sorry for tiring you. What matters is fulfilling the main goals of the trip, namely signing the contract and also finding the path to happiness.
- Levvi: You're the one who should be thanked; do you still remember the contract? I totally forgot about it. By the way, your session with Benjamin seems to have made him confused.
- George: How was that?
- Levvi: I don't know, but after you left he said to me: "He is one of the strangest people I've ever met in my life." I asked him what he meant. He said that you're either a crazy person or a saint.
- George: Ha ha ha!! No third option? I don't want to be a crazy person and, regrettably, I can't be a saint as I've paid him a bribe.
- Levvi: I don't know why what you said to him influenced him, as he repeated to me that we are wrong to think that the worldly existence is just about money. This is the first time in my life I've heard something like that from Benjamin.

- George: To put it frankly, despite me feeling uncomfortable with him, his words had a great affect on me too. Is it true that pleasures of bodies are the torments of the spirit? Isn't there any way in which pleasures can be gathered and pain can disappear?
- Levvi: I wish I could find this way.
- George: So, you are exploring the path to happiness, as Habib told me.
- Levvi: That's a beautiful expression, but what do you think the path to happiness is?
- George: It is the way or path you mentioned you wanted to find just a little while ago. I've been exploring it for quite a while now.
- Levvi: I've also been exploring it for some time now. She smiled, looked into his eyes and said to him: What kind of convergence is this between our souls?!
- George: Habib told me, but why didn't you embrace Catholicism?
- Levvi: The idea is to escape from the complexity of Judaism and its deviations, not to exchange it with another distortion. On the other hand, Judaism is more ancient and holier.
- George: Tell me frankly, as you usually do, is this the only reason or are there other reasons?
- Levvi: In fact, changing religions isn't an easy process at all. How can you imagine the one who changes his religion will be able to deal with people around him? How can I deal with Benjamin? Do you expect me to remain in my job one more day longer?
- George: So, you're afraid of him?
- Levvi: I said to you I wasn't convinced at first. But putting it bluntly, I'm afraid of changing my religion. Freedom has a precious price …infinitely precious!
- George: We are bound to pay this price to have our freedom because there is nothing equivalent to it.
- Levvi: I'm still exploring the right decision, or the path to happiness. When I'm convinced, I may bravely make the decision or may not. I don't know... I really don't know!
- George: Are you afraid of Benjamin?
- Levvi: Certainly! Do you think that the right and brave decision, or what you express as the path to happiness, is the thing that will make me embrace Christianity?

- George: You have an extraordinary ability to turn the table upside down, I don't know why.
- Levvi: Didn't I say to you that our spirits hover together and may have mixed at some time?
- George: You've become a philosopher O beauty, how can spirits blend?
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! I don't know. All that I know is that bodies blend just as spirits do, and my spirit is floating with yours.
- George: It is better for spirits to hover happily than for them to hover in confusion and uncertainty.
- Levvi: You're right, but let's not talk about that now. It will be only a few minutes before we reach the Wailing Wall, or as Muslims call it the Buraq Wall. It is the last remaining monument of Solomon's Temple. According to Jewish rabbis, it has been forbidden for Jews to enter the holy sanctuary since the destruction of the Temple. So the Wall is the closest point to the temple where Jews can pray, in accordance with the modern Jewish law. It's named "the Wailing Wall" because of the rituals of mourning which are performed there.
- George: When did they start worshipping there?
- Levvi: Before the sixteenth century, the Jews performed their prayers and rituals of mourning on the destruction of Solomon's Temple, in different places around the holy sanctuary. Then they gathered annually in front of a stone close to the wall of the holy sanctuary. It's named the "Wailing Wall", and Muslims name it the "Buraq Wall".
- George: So, what is the Buraq Wall?
- Levvi: It's also sacred to Muslims. They said that their Prophet was taken from Mecca on a beast called al-Buraq, and he stopped it at that wall.
- George: Do you let Muslims worship God at this place?
- Levvi: We left the holy sanctuary for them, and after that they want to take our Wall too! Muslims don't worship God at places of monuments and don't care about memorials and statues.
- George: Habib laughed at me and said to me that we, the Protestants, like Muslims, don't like statues and photographs.
- Levvi: This is what has remained for us of our demolished temple, and we'll unearth for the entire world the monuments which prove that.
- George: You haven't found the monuments all of these years and you still hope

to find them?

- Levvi: Ha ha ha! If we don't find them, we'll make them up.
- George: So, you aren't convinced you'll find them?
- Levvi: It doesn't matter whether I am convinced or not, the fact remains that it's a clear state of uncertainty. Some studies showed that the first time people prayed at the Wall was during the reign of the Ottoman Empire, i.e. not before the sixteenth century, as I told you. Muslims said that it was an obvious lie. But despite all that, it's the most important sacred place to us. She turned around to George and said: It's difficult not to train, invigorate and satisfy one's spirit. Would you like us to not have any form of worship at all?
- George: You look different today.
- Levvi: Today is a day of worship when we go to the Wailing Wall. We should get out of the car here and complete the journey on foot.
- George: I hope we only have to walk a little in this sun, because I'm beginning to feel tired.
- Levvi: I hope it won't be clear that you're not a Jew.
- George: Why is that?
- Levvi: Take this hat and wear it.
- George: Okay, ha ha ha! Don't take a photo of me while wearing it, as Katrina might get angry.
- Levvi: It seems that you love Katrina very much!
- George: Yes, she's cultured and religious; her heart is white and pure, like yours.
- Levvi: I hope to find a person like you who appreciates religion, culture and thought. We must take a right, and then turn right again; afterwards we'll see the Wall where the people are weeping.
- George: I'll wear the hat, but I'm not good at pretending to weep.
- Levvi: It's not important, a lot of people like you can't pretend well, and you'll find many others weeping or pretending to weep. You are allowed to enter, but women aren't.
- George: Why is that? I won't enter unless you are with me.
- Levvi: Go and enter, I'll wait for you. Would you like that I enter and be pushed out like a dog? Please, go in by yourself.

George walked the rest of the way alone, although began to feel tired, until he arrived at the Wall. There were a large number of Jews weeping, and also

many others pretending to weep, but not weeping well. He stood beside them to watch them, but he felt annoyed and wanted to leave quickly, especially since he had become even more tired and his temperature had started to soar. He looked around him and didn't see any woman. This made him upset and increased his desire to leave. He decided to go, but his steps became heavy and signs of fatigue appeared on his face. He summoned up his energy until he managed to reach Levvi, whom he found sitting, waiting for him.

- Levvi: Why did you come back so quickly!?
- George: Because I'm extremely tired and feel sick; can we go to the car quickly?
- Levvi: Alright, as you like.
- George: Would you be able to bring the car here?
- Levvi: You look very tired. I'm sorry, but I can't. Lean on me, come on…

George was obviously very tired. Levvi put George's hand around her neck so that he could rest on her shoulder. He tried to raise his hand to walk properly but fatigue had tired him out completely, so he leaned his head against her shoulder. The flow of air moved strands of her hair across his face, the smell of her body tickled his nose and sometimes his cheek touched hers.

- George: Sorry, I tired you out before and am tiring you again now. I seem to be chatting you up.
- Levvi: Never mind, it's important that we get to the car quickly. There's a nearby hospital that we'll head to. You can continue chatting me up after we make sure you're well, ha ha ha!

(2)

When they arrived Levvi took George quickly to the emergency room. The doctor gave him an injection which resulted in him falling into a sudden sleep, so Levvi went to the doctor to ask about his condition.

- Levvi: What's the matter with him?
- Doctor: Don't panic…I gave him a narcotic to help him rest and the blood tests will show what the problem is in an hour. He smiled and said to her: It seems that you care for him very much, is he your husband or boyfriend?
- Levvi: Only my friend.
- Doctor: In any case, the results will be ready in an hour, but I think he'll wake up before then.

Levvi sat by George and looked carefully at the features of his face while he was sleeping. She wiped his forehead and passed her fingers between his strands of hair; she felt a strong connection with him. After a while, George opened his eyes while Levvi's hand was still stroking his hair.

- George: Where am I?
- Levvi: Thank God you are conscious. We're in the hospital and you're okay.
- George: Where's the doctor?
- Levvi: He'll come in a few minutes with the results of the test. Relax and don't tire yourself out, George.

George held her hand, which was still stroking his face and hair. He rubbed his hand on her hand gently.

- George: I'm very grateful to you, Levvi. I didn't expect to tire you like that.
- Levvi: Don't say that. I'm here at your service, George.

A few minutes passed without any words, but looks and touches were stronger than the language of logic. The doctor came to see George…

- Doctor: You're awake, George, good. Your girlfriend… sorry, I mean your friend, has been extremely worried about you
- George: What are the findings, doctor?
- Doctor: It seems to be an acute viral inflammation from the initial results, and the rest of the results will be available tomorrow.
- George: When will I be released?
- Doctor: In an hour or tomorrow, if you like; whenever you feel completely relaxed. When you leave, the nurse will give you your medicine. Excuse me, I have to go now.
- Levvi: Please stay here until tomorrow, George. This is safer for your health.

George held Levvi's hand firmly, and looked at her gratefully.

- George: Thank you, Levvi. I wish to go to the hotel, and I apologize for not continuing the trip.

He took her hand and put it on his chest. Then he raised her hand and kissed it.

- George: I apologize to you.

Levvi was very confused and seemed shy, although she felt a lot happier and blissful. She smiled at him and wanted him not to rush in leaving the hospital, as it was Saturday daytime, and the sun was still shining.

- Levvi: What are you apologizing for? Don't apologize; what matters is for you to be in good health.

Levvi completed the procedures of George's release from the hospital and took the medicine. She booked an appointment for the next day at ten o'clock in the morning.

- Levvi: Must he come tomorrow or can you tell me the results?
- Doctor: If he's tired again, come together. Otherwise, it's okay for you to just come tomorrow to get the result of the remaining tests.
- Levvi: Okay good, then I'll come tomorrow if he's well. Will he leave by ambulance or can we take my car?
- Doctor: You can take your car because he will leave on foot, as you can see. Then he turned around to George and told him that he was officially released and could leave.
- Levvi: Wait here please George, I'll go and get the car.

Levvi returned and held George's hand until they reached the car. She opened the door for him and remained by him to help him. He looked into her blue eyes, which were full of kindness and affection.

- George: Thank you, Levvi. I don't know how to thank you.

Without thinking, he turned to her, drew his body near hers, hugged and gave a long kiss. She felt extremely confused, although there was a smile on her face she tried to conceal it.

- Levvi: Sorry, this is a day which is only for worship. You don't need to thank me; I acted according to my conscience.
- George: I'm sorry, I might have embarrassed you, but I didn't know how to express my thankfulness and gratitude to you. So I kissed you.
- Levvi: Don't worry. You have to relax now. She smirked and said: Kach kissed me a lot and didn't apologize! How much I hated it.
- George: I'm sorry, I didn't intend to insult you and I don't know why I did that. Perhaps it was a moment of weakness from me because of my illness. Or as Habib said "admiration of the beautiful spirit is blended with admiration of the beautiful body."
- Levvi: It may be the blending of spirits we were talking about. Leave it for now. How are you feeling?
- George: I feel embarrassed in front of you, and also I'm ashamed of myself. I

have been weak due to my lust. Take it from me, I didn't intend to embarrass you, but it was an expression of what was in my heart.

- Levvi: Please, close the matter. I said to you that the dirty Kach kissed me and actually forced himself on me more than once, and he never said sorry. Rather, I sometimes felt that I enjoyed it. Imagine I enjoyed being forced to relinquish my principles. Benjamin might have been truthful when he said that we give our bodies pleasures in ways that harm our spirits.
- George: Or perhaps we haven't found the path yet on which our bodies can conform with our souls, when our spirits make our bodies happy and our bodies make our spirits happy.
- Levvi: Your search of the path to happiness might help you reach that. Don't forget to tell me if you reach it, or else I won't forgive or excuse you.
- George: I wonder when I will finish this path to happiness. Everyone I meet seems to be waiting for the result. I repeat my regret and also my gratitude to you, Levvi.
- Levvi: We'll reach the hotel in a few minutes and I want you to rest well today in your room. I'll arrange for supper to come to you in your room too, and your breakfast in the morning. Tomorrow I'll go to the hospital to bring the results of the tests for you, and then I'll come to you. When will you travel back to Britain?
- George: I'm at a loss for words. Thank you so much. My plane leaves at six o'clock in the evening.

They reached the hotel and Levvi went up with him to the hotel room and made sure he went to lie on his bed.

- Levvi: I'd like to sit with you, but I'm afraid of bothering you with our discussions, so it's better that I leave.
- George: You don't know how happy I am when I have a discussion with you, but go home and relax. Sorry, I wore you out very much today.
- Levvi: The sun has set and I'd like to do something, and I don't know why. Explain it as you like.
- George: I don't understand.

Levvi approached George, hugged and gave him a long kiss which made George feel like he was a desert plant being irrigated with water. In spite of his tiredness and exhaustion, he wished she would have hugged him even longer.

- Levvi: Saturday is over; I'll leave the meaning of what I did for you to work out, because I'm actually just as surprised as you. Goodbye.

Levvi's kiss was so unexpected to George. He didn't understand the reason behind the kiss, and he also didn't understand the reason why he kissed her. He said to himself: "Do we act without choice? Or is the illness the reason? Or perhaps the blending of spirits can explain that? Or the blending between the admiration of the spirit and the body, as Habib had said? Whatever the reason, it shows human weakness. Perhaps it shows our need for Jesus to make atonement for our sins." His mind was preoccupied by thinking about Levvi, remembering how she helped him and how she feared for him. While in such a state, his mobile rang. It was Katrina.

- Katrina: My darling, how are you now?
- George: Fine, thank God. I left the hospital and I'm well. Who told you about my illness?
- Katrina: Your illness! Which illness? All that I know is what Tom told me during the church ceremony yesterday, that you sent him a message telling him you were tired.
- George: Tom again?
- Katrina: My darling, are you still suspicious of me?
- George: No, I'll return tomorrow and I'm okay. The plane takes off at six o'clock in the evening.
- Katrina: We'll wait for you with an ambulance.
- George: There is no need, I'm okay, really.
- Katrina: I'd like to be sure that you're well. I don't want to bother you too much now. Try to relax. May the Lord be with you.
- George: May the Lord be with you, my darling.

George ended the call while contemplating over the fate which made Katrina phone him just after Levvi's kiss, which reminded him of Katrina's kiss with Tom and how mad he was about it. He wondered: "Were we a feather being blown about by the wind? Or perhaps fate drove me to a thing I had no knowledge about? Do the pleasures of the body mean the misery of the spirit and principles? Can't we just combine them?" It seems as though the next few days will be full of unpredictable events.

In the meanwhile, the waiter came to his room with supper. He entered the room smiling, and greeted George.

- Waiter: It seems that the lady loves and cares about you very much. She personally made sure of the quality of food and gave us instructions to remind you to take your medicine. She also didn't leave until she had made sure that we had brought up your food.

- George: Good. Thanks a lot.

He had supper quickly. Then he flung himself onto the bed, thinking about everything that had happened that day. He really wished to check his mail, but then he thought it would better to delay that until the next day.

(3)

George woke up at nine o'clock the next morning when the waiter knocked at the door with breakfast.

- Waiter: This is as per your girlfriend's instructions, who called half an hour earlier to make sure that we were preparing your breakfast. She also called us at two o'clock in the morning to make certain we'd contact you to take your medicine. You're lucky to find such a captivating beautiful loving woman and girlfriend that loves you like that!

George thanked him, but he didn't say more than that. He just repeated in his head : "captivating girlfriend that loves you like that." He ate breakfast and then opened the computer in order to check his emails and reply to as many as he could. Afterwards, he wrote a message to Adam and Tom to tell them about his illness and his intention to return to London. He asked them if they knew anything about the joys of the spirit, or if the spirit had only misery and that all pleasures were only for the body. He asked: "Can we make both of them happy, or is it necessary that in order for our spirits to be happy, our minds and bodies have to be miserable?"

Levvi went to the hospital to get the results of the tests. The doctor told her that George had a virus that was rare and scientifically, it was the first time that it had ever affected the brain... The doctor recommended that George should go back to hospital for a period of one week to ten days. He said that they couldn't predict what the final result of George's state would be because the virus could become active at any time. Furthermore, he said that sudden changes could occur in George's state which might require the presence of a doctor. Levvi wept uncontrollably because she was afraid for George and didn't know what to do. As a result she called Habib, who came to her in the hospital. She asked herself,

and also Habib asked her why she was so attached to George. Was it a sensual attachment with a man who refused to sleep with her, as a kind of retaliation to her femininity? Or was it a spiritual attachment with his thinking, innate nature, and culture? Or was it due to both of them being open-minded and exploring the route to happiness? Habib tried to calm her down while she was weeping. Then they went together to visit George in the hotel.

George's mobile rang while he was still checking his emails. He answered and Levvi said to him:

- Levvi: I'm with Habib, can we come up?
- George: Yes, sure. You're welcome.

Levvi entered with a sad smile, greeted him and shook his hand.

- Levvi: Habib is with me; can he come in?
- George: Sure, your guest is my guest. Let him in.

Habib entered. George welcomed him and was happy to see him.

- Habib: It seems that your illness is due to me, because when we last met you looked a little bit sick. But I can assure you that Levvi has nothing to do with it.
- George: Levvi is innocent of any defect. She is more righteous than righteousness.
- Habib: What's this flirtation in my presence!
- George: Ha ha ha! I forgot that you're our guard.

With a shy mocking smile looking at George, she said:

- Levvi: I don't understand what you meant by saying Habib is our guard - our guard from what?
- Habib: Never mind, George's just trying to harbor hatred between us. He turned to George and said to him: How is your health now?
- George: As you see, I'm much better now. I was worn out yesterday and I made Levvi tired too.
- Levvi: You didn't tire me at all. I didn't know what to do? I'm always confused in embarrassing situations. I hope I didn't tire you. We should have cancelled the visit when you told me you were tired. A misunderstanding might have been the reason!
- George: You're never wrong. What happened to me was sudden.
- Levvi: The doctor recommended that you should go back to hospital for two or three days. What's your opinion?

- George: The plane takes off at six o'clock this evening. Thus I must head for the airport in two and a half hours from now, and you say to me two or three days!
- Levvi: Please George, two or three days only. Just so that we make sure that you're well.
- George: I'm well, don't worry. What were the results of the last test?
- Habib: Give it to him, Levvi. This is a good report; the doctor just wants you to go to the hospital to be sure that you are well.

George took the report from Levvi while looking into her eyes. He promised her he'd look after himself and go to the hospital immediately after his arrival in London.

- Levvi: You must go to see a doctor the minute you land in London, and then tell us that you're fine, George.
- George: Katrina, my wife, heard that I was ill and she said that she would wait for me with an ambulance at the airport. I begged her not to do that, but she insisted. She is stubborn like you, Levvi.
- Levvi: Katrina did the right thing so that we can make sure that you're fine. There's nearly two hours left, you should have your dinner, and then prepare your suitcases to travel.
- George: Dinner will be ready in an hour in the hotel restaurant. I'd like to invite you two, and don't turn down my invitation. I only need fifteen minutes after dinner to have a bath and prepare my suitcases.
- Levvi: We agree on condition that dinner will be in your room, and not in the hotel restaurant, so that we won't tire you out.
- George: Oh, Levvi, I'd like to move a little and I won't be tired at all if it's in the restaurant.

Habib tried to cut the hidden flirtation between them…

- Habib: In order to benefit from our remaining time, what's the news on the path to happiness?
- George: This is the second time I've traveled to explore the path to happiness, in addition to many gatherings, dialogues, and meetings. This subject has taken me a long time and a lot of effort. I hope all of my efforts will end in success.
- Levvi: Your success is a success for us all, and we are waiting for the results that you will reach.
- Habib: Where did you travel the first time?

- George: I'll tell you the order, in the same way Katrina said it: "The land of wonders, the land of legends, then the land of churches."
- Habib: We know the land of wonders, which is India, and also the land of legends. But where is the land of churches?
- George: Rome and the Vatican. It's supposed to be my next destination.
- Habib: Jerusalem is very important; it's the cradle of religions, and their origin and conflicts. And it is possible to appreciate the significance of your visit to the Vatican, since it's one of the most important places for the Christians and their different denominations. But why did you choose India as your first destination?
- George: Do the heavenly religions have priority over man-made religions? I went to India to find that out, and then the question was…
- Levvi: Sorry to interrupt you, but the first question should have been: what is the best, religion or atheism?
- George: You're right, but I used to and still do argue that atheism is a psychological disease which has a bleak view of life. This is because atheists believe in the existence of God in their heart. You can't find any people who are more worried, diseased or worse off than atheists.

Habib smiled while looking at Levvi, and said:

- Habib: He's right, but he's supposed to explore that while being impartial and scientific.
- George: In fact, I did research it. But to where do you want me to travel to verify that?
- Habib: Ha ha ha! Travel inside the head of any atheist and you'll verify what you said!! I don't know how they put up with themselves!!
- Levvi: That is why they're the people who commit suicide more than others and feel depressed the most.
- George: Let me continue… the second question was: which heavenly religions are the best? That was after I had concluded that manmade religions are made up of superstitions and impostures. So I travelled to the holy land to learn about Judaism at first hand. Then he turned to Levvi and said: I was happy because you accompanied me on this trip.
- Habib: So, our discussions before yesterday about Christianity, its sects and wars, were in haste before the third trip?
- George: It's actually in perfect timing, if you think about it. And the third trip will

be to the Vatican to discover about the Christian religion.

- Habib: Then all that remains is to discover about the religion of Islam.
- Anger seemed to show on Levvi's face. She said:
- Levvi: The religion of barbarians, go to Mecca to discover it. They won't let you get inside, no matter what you do.
- George: Ha ha ha! Calm down. In fact, I hoped to have met some Muslims here in Jerusalem. Don't forget that the majority of the population here are Muslims. But unfortunately I wasn't able to do that because of the shortness of my journey and my illness. Anyhow, I might not need to travel to a Muslim country.

Habib looked into Levvi's eyes…

- Habib: As for preventing non-Muslims entering Mecca, it's just like the Jews who prevent the Muslims from going to the Wailing Wall, preventing women from entering the Wailing Wall or preventing the youth from performing prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday or…
- George: Take it easy. Didn't I tell you that you're a Muslim hiding in Catholicism?
- Levvi: Ha ha ha! He's always like that. Now we have with us a person who has the same religion as you but who is against you.
- Habib: Don't ask for George's help against me because George is travelling today, and we will continue with our discussion. But you should study Islam as you studied Judaism and Christianity, in order to be just, George. Didn't I ask you to study atheism? Is atheism better than Islam for you two?
- George: Ha ha ha! Perhaps.
- Habib: It's late, do you want us to go down to the restaurant before you, or we'll go together?
- Levvi: We must help him go down as he's tired.
- George: No thank you, Levvi. You two go ahead to the restaurant, and I'll meet you there. I just need to go to the bathroom.

Habib and Levvi went to the restaurant. They chose a good table and sat waiting for George to come. During this time, Habib said

- Habib: I'm afraid that you admire him more than you should.
- Levvi: Why do you say that?
- Habib: Sorry for interfering, but your looks at one another are suspicious as well as your words. It is as if you two were lovers.

- Levvi: I don't know why you reached that conclusion! However, as I told you from the beginning, he refused to sleep with me. He said to me that he loved his wife and regarded that as a form of unfaithfulness to her.
- Habib: I said to you before: do not mix the admiration of the spirit and ethics with sensual sexual admiration.
- Levvi: A very strange thing happened yesterday; I carried him after he became tired and fell down, and then he kissed me. So when I put him on his bed in his room, I gave him a kiss in return.
- Habib: Regrettably, kisses are seen as being entirely normal in both of your societies, but what isn't normal is that you give up your principles.
- Levvi: I don't know why that happened. I think it's as you say, or perhaps human weakness.

In the meantime, George arrived and sat at the table with them.

- George: The restaurant is offering an open buffet for dinner today. Would you like to go and serve yourself now?

After fetching their food and being seated at the table again, Habib suggested completing their discussion with George and Levvi. He thought that it was a golden opportunity, because the three of them were now sitting together.

- Habib: Let's continue where we left off. I feel it's important to travel at least once to a Muslim country, in particular.
- George: Although I always seem to differ with you, but I agree on this point, because you defended atheism as you defended Islam.
- Habib: Ha ha ha! I didn't and won't defend atheism or Islam. I'm speaking about the scientific methodology that should be used in order to reach the truth.
- George: Every time I travel I have many long discussions, which are similar to our discussions. Also, every time I travel I gain extensive information, a deep understanding and I participate in long dialogues following my return from my travel; though there is more information this time than the time available to contemplate. Perhaps I can think deeply especially after my return to my home, because it has been a very fruitful travel.

Levvi, while looking in George's eyes flirtatiously, said:

- Levvi: Could I ask you a question, George? I hope it won't be embarrassing.
- George: Yes, okay, go ahead.
- Levvi: If you are convinced that Judaism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy or even Islam

or Protestantism is the path to happiness, will you convert to the right one directly or will you begin to evaluate the profit and loss involved?

- George: I think all evaluations of profit and loss would end if you find the path to happiness. It's entirely profitable. Is there a path happier and more profitable than this path. Anyhow, the important point is for me to find it.

Habib looked at George firmly and said to him:

- Habib: You will definitely find it, but I have doubts about what you are saying.
- George: What are your doubts?
- Habib: About the easiness of finding the path to happiness, and the absence of any need to assess the profit and loss involved. Some decisions are difficult to take!
- George: How is that?
- Habib: Let me roughly explain the idea to you. All of the people who suffer from diabetes know that eating sugar is harmful to them, but they continue to eat it. Also, all the people who are obese know that unnecessary unhealthy eating is harmful to them, but they still over-eat.
- George: What is the connection here?
- Habib: Changing religion is certainly much more difficult than changing an eating habit. Rather, it's a change to the meaning of life, its reason and motives. Then he turned to Levvi and said: I think that Levvi understands that well. In any case, you'll definitely find the path.
- George: Why are you so sure of that? Aren't you also searching for it and haven't found it until now?
- Habib: It's not possible to be so insistent on seeking the path to happiness, and then not find it. It's not part of the Lord's Generosity not to help whoever wants to reach the truth.
- George: Your words are very similar to that of an old man who I met on the street not too long ago.
- Habib: What did the old man say?
- George: You may be shocked about what I'm going to say, but hear me out. I was going through a bad phase in my life and feeling depressed, and I thought that the only way out was to commit suicide. But before I was able to do that, I met him and he looked so happy, so I asked him if he was happy. He told me that he was, so I asked him how I could reach this happiness? Actually, he was the first one to coin the phrase "the path to happiness".
- Habib: How did he answer you?
- George: He didn't really have an answer for me, and said that if I was insistent

and determined, I would reach that path.

- Habib: Didn’t you keep in touch with him afterwards?
- George: Regrettably, I didn’t take his number or address. He took my number and address, but he never contacted me.
- Habib: Wow! Look at the time; we’d better eat our dinner quickly so that you can finish packing your bags.
- George: I won’t be late. I’ll be back in fifteen minutes. Then he went upstairs to the room.
- Habib: I admire George’s bravery and simplicity.
- Levvi: And so do I.
- Habib: As for me, I can admire him as much as I want, because I am a man. But as for you, be careful of what you say.
- Levvi: You Arabs make a distinction between men and women.
- Habib: Arabs or Jews? I think we closed the subject of debate between us, but there remain some differences you can’t ignore.
- Levvi: What are they?
- Habib: Ha ha ha! I’m not beautiful like you, and I’m not a woman. Do you want to change the nature of things? Eating will always be different from drinking. Also, everyone has their different roles, and you will remain a beautiful lady who is partaking in the discussion, and me, the male partner in the discussion. As for making women similar to dogs, trash or impurities, that certainly doesn’t come from a person or a religion which respects those who embrace it.
- Levvi: I understand totally what you mean. I wish you wouldn’t criticize me.
- Habib: Sorry, but it’s important to admire him for his way of thinking, insistence, ethics and spirit, but not for his body. I told him that before and that’s the meaning of “I’m your guard”.
- Levvi: Ah, now I understand the meaning of “my guard”, and I’ll be careful. It’s more than enough what happened yesterday.

George went down to the reception area quickly and finished the hotel procedures involved with checking out. He went to Levvi and Habib, who were waiting for him.

- George: The time has flown by, can we go now?
- Levvi: Yes, as I’m afraid that there’ll be traffic or checkpoints on the way.
- Habib: May the Lord protect you; sorry that I can’t give you a lift as I have an appointment, but Levvi will be happy to bring you. Don’t forget to tell us about the latest developments on the path to happiness.

- George: Won’t you complete being the guard?
- Habib: Ha ha ha! God is the One Who is the Protector, and principles prevent man from doing wrong.
- Levvi: I’ll go and get the car.
- Habib: Thank you, George. We had a good time with you. I’ll wait for your news; may the Lord protect you. Don’t forget to go to the nearest hospital in London as soon as you arrive. Also, don’t forget to take the hypodermic which is with Levvi.
- George: What hypodermic?
- Habib: A hypodermic you can take if you feel sick on the plane, the doctor gave it to us.
- George: Okay, and thank you.

(4)

George went outside to find Levvi waiting for him with the car. After he put the suitcases into the car, he got in the car and off they went to the airport.

- Levvi: We’ll miss you, George. Your stay with us was short, but you left a memorable and definite impression on us.
- George: No, your shining smile, culture and thinking are the ones that can’t be forgotten. I’m the one who benefited from you, and tired you out. Thank you.

Levvi’s eyes were filled with tears.

- Levvi: I’ll miss your discussions, dialogues and stares. So I’ll return to the state of persecution in which I used to live.
- George: Benjamin doesn’t deserve such tears.
- Levvi: The problem isn’t with Benjamin or the Jews. The real problem is inside of me because I can’t find the path to happiness, and I felt a lot happier with our discussions.
- George: Our discussions can continue with each other and so will your discussions with Habib. You are right, as since I started to explore the path to happiness, I haven’t felt the distress that didn’t use to leave me.
- Levvi: I regard it as a promise from you to tell me all that you reach in exploring the route to happiness, and I’ll tell you what Habib and I reach too.
- George: A promise, but on one condition.
- Levvi: What is it?
- George: To wipe your tears and smile. I wish to see your face smiling.
- Levvi: Okay. I apologize to you for what I did when I left you yesterday. Believe

me; I don’t know why I did that.

- George: I understand you completely, because I’m like you, I don’t know why I kissed you in the car on the way to the hotel from the hospital. Ha..ha..ha! Perhaps due to my inability to weep at the Wailing Wall.
- Levvi: Why didn’t you weep?
- George: Why should I weep? Should I weep at a temple that hasn’t been proven to be authentic until now in spite of all that they have done to try and find it!
- Levvi: Don’t you see that you are exceeding the limit in speaking about my religion?
- George: Ha..ha..ha! Sorry, I’ll exceed the limit in Protestantism to atone for what I’ve done, as the Protestants are the ones who killed millions of Catholics in Europe. There, are you satisfied and have you forgiven me, ma’am?
- Levvi: I forgive you, sir, but on one condition.
- George: What is it?
- Levvi: Tell me how you are tomorrow, even with only just one message.
- George: Okay.
- Levvi: We’ve arrived. This is Ben Gurion Airport, named after the first prime minister in Israel. Did you know that this airport previously won the prize of being the best airport in the Middle East?

George went to finish the check-in procedures for travelling while Levvi waited for him. When he went to enter the departure gate, Levvi stretched out her hand to give him the hypodermic. She said to him that it was from the doctor, and that he should take it if he had a high fever or felt tired, since it would relax him until he reached London.

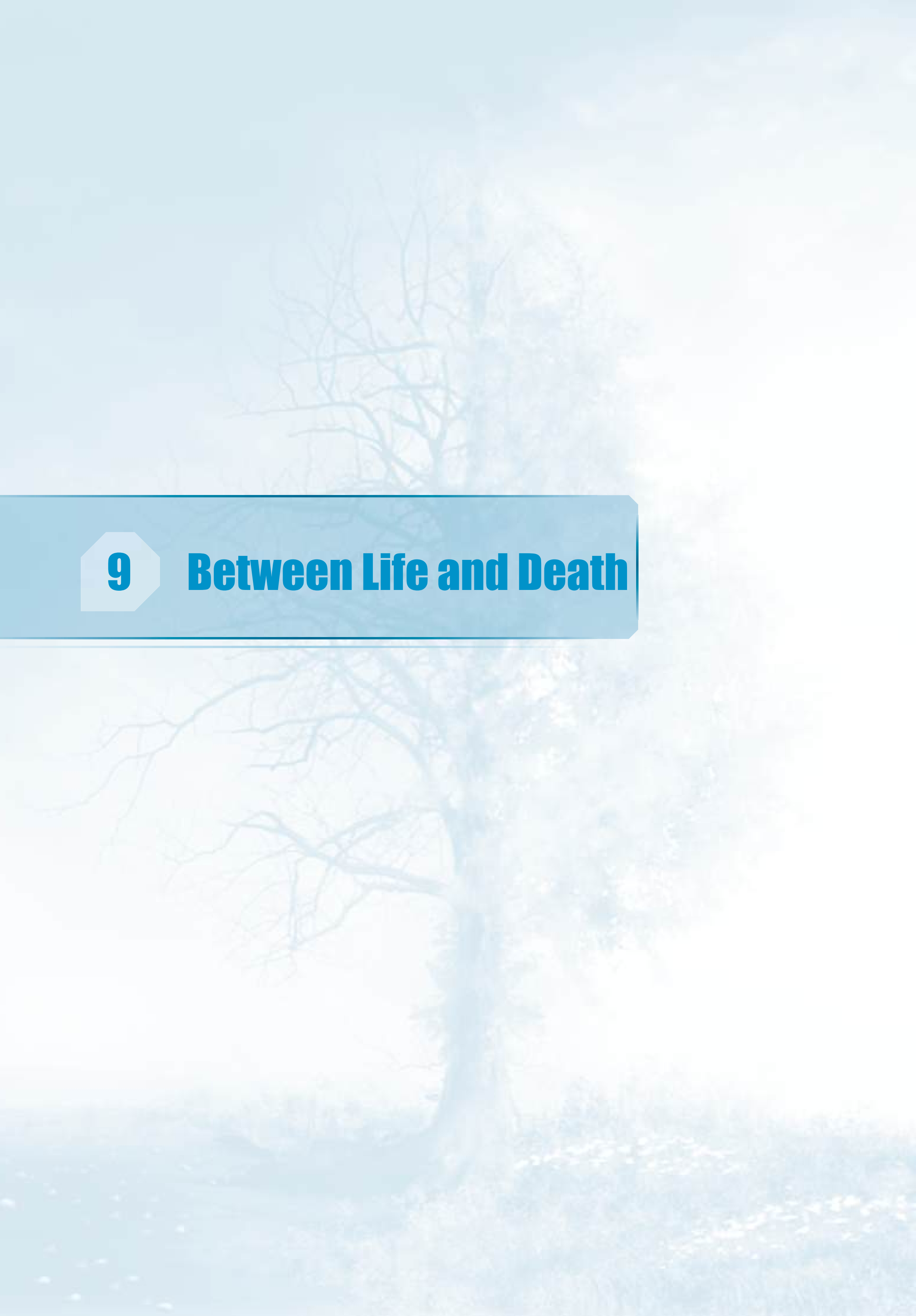
- George: Thank you.

Levvi’s eyes were once again filled with tears as she extended her hand to shake hands with George. Then, she said: Thank you from the depths of my heart for every moment you spent with us. George shook hands with her. He felt as if he would lose a sweetheart he had known for many years. But he constrained his desire, just like she did.

- George: May God be with you and Jesus protect you.
- Levvi: May God be with you and the Lord protect you.

Then she turned back, heartbroken by George’s parting.

Between Life and Death



9

Between Life and Death

Between Life and Death

(1)

Unable to stop thinking of Levvi, although having only stayed four days with her, George boarded the plane, wondering what her secret was?! She seemed like an angel in a cruel and unfair society; he sadly remembered her discussions about the status of women in Judaism and how they basically have no rights. What kind of religion is that which hands down women like property or like rubbish and doesn't give them the right of heritance, in fact no rights at all!!! He remembered the discussion about the distortions of the Torah, and about the chosen people who have the right to kill, plunder and steal "the sons of Shiloh". He also remembered their dialogue about the imaginary monuments that claimed to be the proof of the Jews' right to possess the land of Palestine. He smiled when he remembered that she said she wouldn't abandon the complications of Judaism for that of Catholicism. While his was reminiscing, the passenger to this left turned and asked him:

- Passenger: What is this injection you are holding, sir?
- George: It was given to me by my doctor. He stressed that I should keep it with me on the plane in case I run a sudden temperature.
- Passenger: Can I have a look at it, please?
- George: Here you are. Are you a doctor?

He examined the injection and read the instructions on the attached paper.

- Passenger: I'm a pharmacist; this injection seems to be really important for you, yet this kind of medicine is rarely used. What do you need it for?
- George: I'm not too sure. The doctor didn't tell me.
- Passenger: All that I do know is that this injection is used for a serious condition, to reduce the impact of viruses that can't be destroyed.
- George: I'm fine, but it seems that my friends are taking extra care of me.
- Passenger: Maybe. But I can't agree with you because this injection can't be bought except in the case of emergency and with a prescription.
- George: Maybe, I don't know, but I feel healthy.
- Passenger: Good health is a crown on the heads of the healthy which is only seen by the ill. Sorry for bothering you.

- George: Never mind… thank you.

George began reminiscing again…his heart still felt sad when he thought of Levvi. He felt at ease while remembering Habib, although he was an Arab. George enjoyed his company and remembered their discussions about Muslims, when he had said to him: “You are a Muslim dressed in the robe of Catholicism”…he was thinking that his journey which was really enjoyable and… Then the stewardess interrupted him. She said:

- Stewardess: Excuse me sir, what would you prefer: chicken or meat?
- George: Meat.

The pharmacist turned to him, saying:

- Passenger: You’re very engrossed in your thoughts!
- George: Oh… I was just recollecting my trip. It was a fantastic journey; rich with knowledge.
- Passenger: How long did you stay in Jerusalem?
- George: Four days.
- Passenger: Only four days!?
- George: Yes, but they were worth months, I’ll never forget the fantastic people whom I met nor the things I learned from them in that sacred land.
- Passenger: Are you a Jew?
- George: No, why?
- Passenger: Because I am. And excuse me for saying, but when you expressed how happy you were and how fantastic the people you met there were, I thought that you must be a Jew because they are the only people who are comfortable there. As for the Christians and Muslims, they aren’t comfortable because their conditions are different from the Jews.
- George: I met both Jews and Christians there, and they were all fantastic.
- Passenger: Maybe this is the case in Britain, but not in Tel Aviv where religion is the prime factor that moves the people.
- George: Seeing as you said you’re a Jew, can I ask you a question?
- Passenger: Sure.
- George: Do you understand the teachings of the Torah?
- Passenger: No, they can’t be understood except through the Talmud.
- George: Great, so then do you understand the Talmudic teachings?
- Passenger: Ha ha ha! No again, but they came to us in this state.

- George: Excuse me, but doesn’t this internal contradiction upset you?
- Passenger: Of course it does, but people are different in how they deal with things that upset them.
- George: How is that?
- Passenger: I run to my work, some people run to wine or women, some to researching these issues, and others to blind religiosity.
- George: This is nice, you are so honest with yourself.
- Passenger: Thank you.
- George: But the question remains: does escaping lead to having a peace of mind or not?
- Passenger: I think that all the wise people have agreed that an atheist man is a sick one, so escaping is a way to stay far from both atheism and the contradiction of religion.
- George: Except those who choose to delve into these issues as a means of escaping. Don’t you agree with me?
- Passenger: Yes, but I don’t like this way; it makes you feel grief, sorrow and confusion.
- George: Do you mean that there is no solution but escaping?
- Passenger: Yes and no.
- George : Ha ha ha! How’s that?
- Passenger: Yes as I don’t know anything else, and no, as it’s impossible for God to leave us in loss, contradiction and taking escape as the only solution.
- George: Oh, now you seem to be a philosopher, not a pharmacist.
- Passenger: This is exactly what confuses me; the scientific way contradicts what I’m saying. Yet pharmacology only accepts the scientific way; this is what I have studied.
- George: Seeking the truth, or as I always say “the path to happiness”, leads to happiness, not misery.
- Passenger: “The path to happiness”! What a nice expression.
- George: Sorry for interrupting you, but isn’t the plane cold? I feel so cold.

The pharmacist put his hand on George’s forehead, it was hot…

- Passenger: Maybe this is why the doctor gave you this injection. How do you feel now?
- George: I’m feeling even colder, and a bit sick too, but don’t worry; I’ll be fine in

a little while. Now, what's your opinion of "the path to happiness"?

- Passenger: Forget about that now; please give me that injection and the medical examination paper.
- George: Here they are.

The pharmacist asked the stewardess if there was a doctor on the plane, she answered in the negative and told him he was supposed to be on board, but he was late…

- Passenger: No problem, I'll give him the injection myself. I have attended an advanced course on first aid, besides being a pharmacist. He is going to be in a coma until we land. Can you arrange an ambulance to wait for him at London airport?
- George: You don't have to do that, you're over exaggerating; beside my wife will be waiting for me with an ambulance.
- Passenger: I'm not exaggerating; I just don't want to contradict the scientific way of dealing with things.

(2)

When George woke up, he found himself in a hospital in London with Katrina beside him, smiling…

- Katrina: Thank God you're safe, honey.
- George: Where am I?! Where is the pharmacist?
- Katrina: You're at the hospital in London, but who is this pharmacist you're talking about?
- George: In the hospital?! Where is the passenger that was sitting next to me on the plane?
- Katrina: Aha! He didn't leave until he was sure that you were safe with me in the ambulance, then he took our address and left. Thank God you're safe.
- George: How have you been, honey? I missed you so much. I'm sorry for tiring and annoying you; I didn't expect things will be like that.
- Katrina: The doctor read your previous medical reports and took some blood samples. They gave you an x-ray and said that your medical test results should be available tomorrow.
- George: When can we go home?
- Katrina: I don't know, maybe after the test results are available. They said that they will determine how long you're going to need to stay, but that it won't be

less than a week.

- George: A week?!
- Katrina: It doesn't matter; they have assured me that you'll be fine and this is what really matters. They were surprised that you weren't kept at the hospital in Jerusalem.
- George: They tried to keep me in the hospital there, but I refused.
- Katrina: I'll have to take a vacation to be able to stay with you. I've really missed you. This is a good chance for us to stay with each other.
- George: I've missed you too, but I really just want to get out of here. I want to get back home with you.
- Katrina: Don't worry, you'll go home soon, honey. Did you visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher?
-
- George: Yes, just as I promised you; I visited the church of Mary too.
- Katrina: Oh! How happy those who have prayed in this blessed church must be! I really wish I could visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher one day too.
- George: I prayed there for you as I said I would, but what kind of happiness do you mean? I don't feel it.
- Katrina: There is no happiness equal to that of being engaged in worshipping God.
- George: This is what religious Jews say, although their worship and festivals are basically about sorrows and wailing!
- Katrina: This is right, but they worship God according to an abrogated religion that was ended with the emergence of Christ; they even combated Christianity, killed the Christ and tortured his followers.
- George: But Christians believe in the Torah, as it is the Old Testament, don't they?
- Katrina: Yes.
- George: So then how can you say that Judaism was abrogated by the emergence of Christ?
- Katrina: You seem zealous about Judaism, though it has ended as a religion, and the teachings of the Torah only remain as a guide for us.
- George: How do you believe in altered teachings and allow yourself to be guided by them?
- Katrina: Who told you that they're altered?

- George: The Torah says about the daughters of Shiloh: “Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go, lie in wait in the vineyards; And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come you out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.’” Do you know who the daughters of Shiloh were? Do you believe that such a text is from God?
- Katrina: I know who the daughters of Shiloh were very well, and honestly I don’t want to talk about it. That is supposed to be explained by the priests and the popes.
- George: The Torah also says: “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’” Can this cruelty be from God?
- Katrina: Please let it go for now. I know these texts and many others and don’t like discussing them, besides I want you to have some rest now.
- George: Why?
- Katrina: I told you I don’t like discussing these matters. I think you’re going to have enough time here for searching and reading.
- George: You’re right, that’s why I want my laptop to be with me. I want to buy some books about Christianity as well, to read about its doctrines.
- Katrina: That’s fantastic, maybe you’ll convert to Catholicism.
- George: Maybe, maybe not.
- Katrina: Your reading will be good preparation for our trip - you didn’t forget, honey, did you?
- George: I didn’t. I’ll talk tomorrow with the doctor about getting out of here as soon as possible. I’ll also take advantage of my long stay here to read.
- Katrina: Don’t worry about staying here; I’ll stay with you to talk to you, we’ll enjoy it together.
- George: Oh Katrina; I love you so much.
- Katrina: Me too, honey. Can I leave now and come back tomorrow? It’s getting dark and I’ve been here since yesterday.
- George: Sorry for exhausting you, honey; I’ll be waiting for you. I just want my laptop and mobile next to me to finish some work.
- Katrina: I’ll put them on this table beside you, but promise me you won’t exhaust yourself; I want you to rest honey. See you tomorrow.

It was still early and George didn’t feel sleepy, so he decided to read for a while and check his email. When he opened his mail, he found an email from Levvi, asking him about his health and how he was doing; he wrote back to her telling her what had happened to him, and thanked her a lot for everything she had done for him; for the injection and for being so welcoming to him. He told her that he didn’t forget his promise to her, but that he had only just got his laptop and mobile a few minutes earlier. He reassured her he would tell her regularly what was happening during his “path to happiness”, and asked her to thank Habib for him.

He found another email from Adam, replying to his previous one about the happiness of the body and the misery of the soul, and it said:

“…if the body and soul aren’t happy at the same time, then what you call the happiness of the body is in fact the misery of both the body and soul. But this philosophy, thinking only of the happiness of the body, is a bleak one that supposes that life is absolute misery and that there is no place for happiness in it; but is that why we were created?! To live in misery?! Thinking that we’re created for misery is very close to atheism, which attributes all shortcomings to God, or to the pagan religions which are far from understanding God or humans or religion, or to some other religions which have been affected and distorted by paganism. Anyway, this way of thinking shows you the misery and the internal conflicts of those who think this way, more than anything else; It does not represent any scientific, philosophical, or religious view… You must have arrived by now, we can meet and discuss later after you rest from your trip.”

After finishing reading the email, George read it again then said to himself: “This is just like Adam. I don’t know if he is a great philosopher, protestant or a Jew?! In spite of being young and having a simple job, I don’t know how his speech is so simple and deep at the same time?! Adam’s right, neither the body nor the soul can be happy separately; man is an integrated unit, dismantling this unit is a sort of superficial vision of such deep issues.” What kind of pleasure of the body is the pleasure that is experienced through casual whims followed by the misery of the body?! And what kind of pleasure of the soul is the pleasure that is experienced through asceticism and ignoring natural instincts, even if this is described as being ethical or spiritual, such as the asceticism of Buddhism?! On the path to happiness, the soul, mind and body should

be blended together in a combination that makes them happy, not miserable; this is why one can enjoy the body when it has a wise mind that is surrounded by the pleasures of the soul, as the mind disciplines the body and makes it lofty! Some religions abandon the body's pleasures for that of the soul's, while others abandon the soul's pleasures for that of the body's, and none of them manage to achieve the soul's and the body's happiness at the same time.

George looked at his watch; it was eight o'clock, so he called Adam:

- George: Hi Adam, I'm in a hospital in London so I can't meet you, but can you come to visit me here to talk about your philosophy and continue our discussions?
- Adam: I hope you are better soon…I'll come to see you and I promise not to annoy you with my discussions or philosophy, as you call them.
- George: I didn't mean that, I hope you didn't misunderstand me; in fact, I enjoy your philosophy and your discussions.
- Adam: I didn't mean that your words upset me. The matter is simple and I love to be simple. I'll try to see you tomorrow in the evening, during the visiting hours.
- George: I really missed our discussions. See you tomorrow, Adam.
- Adam: Ha ha ha! See you tomorrow; it seems that you confuse your longing for our discussions with that for the coffee I usually make for you, bye now.

George ended the call wondering to himself, "What is it that attracts me to Adam so much? He doesn't appear to be American, maybe he is Greek or Italian, or from Latin America; nevertheless I feel so comfortable with him. What if Adam met Levvi? What would she think about him? Ha ha ha! Would he be able to resist her blue eyes and blonde hair, or would he be just another Kach? Would he follow his own advice or would they be just theoretical, just as many people are? Ha ha ha! Or just as they sometimes are for me?! Anyway, he's coming tomorrow and I'll tell him all I've gone through…"

(3)

The nurse woke George up early and put his breakfast on the table…

- George: When will the doctor come to see me?
- The nurse: He does his rounds of this ward at nine o'clock. If you run a temperature, tell us immediately, otherwise we'll take your temperature once every hour starting from eight o'clock, when the effect of the injection you've taken has worn off.

- George: Thank you. It seems that my high temperature is really serious and that's why it's regularly inspected.
- The nurse: Yes, so if you run a temperature or feel cold, tell us immediately.
- George: Alright.

After finishing breakfast, George began to contemplate on what the nurse had said… He remembered how Levvi watched while he was injected, and he felt a little worried and uneasy about the doctor's arrival. His train of thought was interrupted by the entrance of the doctor at nine thirty…

- George: Tell me frankly about my condition, please.
- Doctor: Until now, they are the same as in Jerusalem.
- George: Excuse me, but I actually haven't been told anything yet. What did they say – what seems to be the problem with me?
- Doctor: There is an unknown virus that has attacked your brain cells. It makes your have a very high temperature very unexpectedly, so we have to keep you here, although your condition is normal and you don't have anything wrong with you. When you run a temperature, you have to be injected with a sedating anti-pyretic, which works for one to two days.
- George: How many days will I have to stay here?
- Doctor: I don't know for now, but we're expecting the results of some other tests to be ready in the next two days. You're expected to stay for two weeks at the worst, unless your condition becomes critical.
- George: What caused this virus?
- Doctor: Even until today, it is unknown; but we'll try our best to make you comfortable and regularly update you with all that you need to know about your condition. Sorry, but this is all we know for now.
- George: Thanks for your help, Doctor.

When the doctor left, George turned on his laptop to plan his long stay in the hospital. He decided to read most of the time, especially since in his "path to happiness" he needs to be more acquainted with his religion, the most important religion. He mocked himself, mumbling: "Be acquainted with Christianity and its doctrines, acquainted with my own religion!" He also decided he would discuss the matter with Katrina - being a Christian theologian - and Adam and Tom, and maybe if he had some time left, have online discussions with Levvi and Habib as well. While finishing planning his stay, he became particularly

engrossed in reading about the comparisons between the Orthodox church, Catholic church and the Protestant church , as they are the most famous and important doctrines of Christianity, and if he studied every doctrine of Christianity he'd never finish.

In the afternoon Katrina came to visit and brought Michael and Sally with her. George was so happy to see them as he had really missed them. He let them sit beside him and began to joke and play with them. Amidst laughing with them, he thought about the pleasures that make both the body and soul happy, and realized for the first time that he felt this kind of pleasure while being with his kids. He wondered to himself: "What if I discover all that makes both the body and soul happy at the same time? Then I would definitely reach happiness…"

He turned to his kids, asking them a question that came to his mind…

- George: What makes you happy the most in your life, Michael?
- Michael: Playing with you, Dad, and playing football.
- George: What about you, Sally?
- Sally: I love playing with you, Dad too, and playing with my dolls.
- George: I love playing with both of you, sweethearts, as well, but is there something else that makes you happy except playing?

To his surprise Michael replied:

- Michael: Sometimes I feel happy and I don't know why, and other times I feel miserable and also I don't know why. Why do you ask, Dad?
- George: Why do you think you feel sometimes happy and other times unhappy, Michael?
- Michael: Maybe I feel happy because I helped a friend, and miserable because I did something wrong.

Katrina smiled listening to this fantastic family discussion, and said: Maybe we feel happiness in our hearts because we love people and wish good for them, sweetheart.

- Michael: You mean just to wish good for people without even doing anything for them, Mummy?!
- Katrina: Sure, and hating people and wishing bad things for them is the same, even without doing anything bad to them.

George wanted to enrich this discussion, so he asked Michael and Sally:

- George: So then why do people choose misery, and not happiness?
- Michael: Because they're stupid.
- Sally: Or because they don't know.
- Katrina: Or because they are both, sweethearts. And besides, being guided to goodness and happiness is a blessing from God.
- George: That's why it's important to seek to find the path to happiness.
- Michael: I heard you telling Mum that you were going to Jerusalem to find the path to happiness, is it only in Jerusalem?
- George: Ha ha ha! No, son, it's just I'm trying to reach that goodness and happiness we're talking about, and my trip to Jerusalem coincided with the signing of a business contract there; so I became acquainted with new people, and learnt and benefitted from them.

Sally spontaneously said:

- Sally: I don't like the people of Jerusalem.

Surprised by her remark, George asked her:

- George: Why?
- Sally: A girl at school told me that her family goes to Jerusalem in Israel, and that it's full of killings, imprisonments, torturings and people being bombed. So I don't like her or the people of Jerusalem.

Katrina was taken aback by what Sally had said, and so she said: No rational human likes terrorism or killings; all the divine and human laws dictate justice and kindness.

Katrina's words reminded George of the classes of Buddhism and the laws of the Old Testament with regards to killings, women, and the daughters of Shiloh, but he smiled and said:

- George: There are also very kind people in Jerusalem from all the religions; Islam, Christianity and Judaism.
- Sally: Then I don't like the Jew, Levvi, as she likes the killings and arrests that happen there.
- George: And who's Levvi?
- Sally: She's the Jewish girl from school.
- George: Well done, Sally! It's good to like or dislike people according to their principles and morals, not because of their appearances or origins.
- Michael: I don't like David, a boy at school; he's always talking about wine.

George glanced at Katrina and smiled…

- George: What's wrong with wine, Michael?
- Michael: I don't know, but it seems to make one drunk and unconscious.

Katrina felt embarrassed, so she said quickly:

- Katrina: You're right Michael, wine is also forbidden in our religion, as it says in the New Testament: " neither let her drink wine or strong drink."

Katrina noticed that George seemed surprised, so she talked about something else:

- Katrina: Did you meet the doctor, George?
- George: Yes.
- Katrina: Is there anything new?
- George: No, the new test results are the same as they were in the hospital in Tel Aviv.
- Katrina: Strange, didn't the doctor in Tel Aviv tell you the results of your tests?!
- George: No, the company there provided me with a service as one of its employees was in contact with the hospital, so Levvi was the one who got the results, but she refused to tell me what they said, so as not to scare me.
- Katrina seemed jealous.
- Katrina: It seems that Levvi is very pretty, and very keen not to hurt your feelings as well!!
- Sally: If she's like the Levvi at school, that doesn't make her pretty or kind, Dad.
- George: But Sally, Levvi is kind and pretty.
- Katrina: According to the Jewish women, sex is easy for them, as it says in the Old Testament.
- Michael: Does the Old Testament promote sex, Mum?
- Katrina: I was just kidding Michael. Wasn't I, George?
- George: Yes…sure, your mother loves kidding. No right religion would promote killing people, drinking wine or undisciplined sex. Besides, no true believer would believe in these.

Katrina understood what George was trying to tell her by talking with Michael, so she tried again to talk about something else, she said:

- Katrina: It's getting late, I'm leaving now, George, to take the kids home, then I'll come back to you.
- George: I'll be waiting for you, honey. I wish that you'd come to see me every

other day at least, my heroes. Love you guys very much.

(4)

After Katrina left with the kids, George became engrossed in his thoughts, wondering to himself: “Am I going to live the rest of my life in conflict with thoughts, philosophies and religions?! Why can’t all the religions work together in harmony for the happiness of all humanity?! Why can’t humans just live in internal peace with themselves, and in external harmony with each other?!” He smiled talking to himself: “Maybe I’ve become a big dreamer; life is so strange; sometimes it changes us into some kind of a utopian! What if God guided the people to him without the effort destined for them? But then I imagine that life would be boring, or that we’d maybe even be another sort of creation other than humans with our weaknesses. Then there wouldn’t be something called evil or even good, as goodness can’t be realized except through the existence of evil. The existence of both evil with good is evidence of our existence. Wow! How man can easily lose himself in his own philosophies and ideas unless he realizes his destination and the significance of his life and death.”

George was waiting for Katrina and Adam, although she had just left. He switched on his laptop to check his email when he found a message from Kach, thanking him for finishing the job and telling him that he would visit him that day or perhaps the next, after finding out from his wife, Katrina, that he was sick. Afterwards, he logged onto Facebook to have a look at Adam’s profile, but he didn’t add him in order for Adam not to notice that he was reading what he was writing about him regularly. He found a second article, titled: Lessons from my friend on his quest to find happiness (2):

“My friend who is seeking happiness is still as determined as ever to find the path, and I’ve learned the following lessons from him:

1- Great things, like seeking happiness, require exerting a large amount of effort and facing great trials.

2- Determination creates opportunities; the more my friend persists, the more opportunities to learn and gain knowledge are opened up for him.

3- Overcoming oneself; not overcoming the incidents of life, is the greatest victory and the biggest success ever achieved by a seeker of happiness.

4- In spite of my friend’s great determination, I’m concerned as although he knows what he doesn't want, he doesn't focus enough on what he does want.

Stay tuned for another lesson soon, thank you all, Adam."

George read the article again, slowly this time; he felt as if Adam knew what was inside his head. He began talking to himself: "What did Adam mean with 'the great trial'? And what did he mean with 'overcoming oneself'? Does Adam know that his friend failed the trial, as he abandoned his principles and bribed someone? Does Adam know that he kissed a beautiful woman and desired to betray his wife with her? Does he know that he isn›t yet able to make a decision to leave that company which is managed by the immoral Kach? Does he know that he sometimes even helps Kach with bribery? And what did Adam mean by his last point? Why is he worried that I know all that I don›t want but not what I do want? Doesn›t knowing what I don›t want mean knowing what I do want? But as I don›t want to be a lost atheist, nor an unreasonable Buddhist, nor a Hindu worshipping a cow or thousands gods, nor a complex Jew, then what do I really want? Perhaps Adam›s right about his concerns. I›ll try to discuss this with him today, without telling him that I›ve read what he›s written about me, so that he will continue to write freely.»

George felt that he was getting cold; he tried to lower his temperature, but he started to feel a bit sick. The nurse saw him so she came quickly…

- The nurse: Do you feel cold?
- George: A little bit, but maybe my temperature has lowered now.
- The nurse: No, the temperature is the same. Relax on your bed. I'll tell the doctor and bring the injection in a minute.

The nurse came back quickly to give George the injection…

- The nurse: This is the new injection prescribed for you.
- George: New?!
- The nurse: Yes, it lasts longer than the previous one, but you'll become totally unconscious. Sorry, but you're supposed to be injected as soon as possible! Would you please stretch out your arm?

George lost consciousness a few minutes after being injected.

When Katrina came back and found George in that state, she sat herself beside him and waited for him to wake up. She was looking at him lying in the bed, feeling so much in love with him. She knew well that he loved her, but he kept on arguing with her and refusing to submit to God, as Catholicism dictates.

Then she began thinking how she enjoyed their discussions so much, although she had no clear answers to many of his questions and often became confused and embarrassed. She asked herself: "Isn't submission to God enough to make George abandon those questions and discussions? Or is submission a way of irrationally escaping the answer? It's true that Catholicism sometimes confuses me, but Judaism and even Protestantism have the same contradictions, and many more too. Sorry Jesus, I don't mean, of course, that you didn't save us, but…"

Then Levvi, the pretty Jew that George talked about, crossed her mind… She trusted George very much and knew his good principles well and also his faithfulness, but why did he come back from his trip with only stories about the opposite sex?! She smiled when she realized that she was feeling jealous, and wondered where this jealousy was when Tom kissed her? She said to herself: "George's right, how do I allow myself to drink wine when I know that the New Testament forbids this, and how could I go on teaching that to my kids?! Oh my God! What am I going to say when he discusses it with me…?"

While Katrina was absorbed in her thoughts, she heard someone asking the nurse: "Where's George, gorgeous?" His inappropriate looks at the nurse were even ruder than his words. The nurse pointed at the room, then he entered and shook hands with Katrina.

- The visitor: Hi, are you George's wife?
- Katrina: Yes, who are you?
- The visitor: I'm Kach, George's mate at the company; you answered my call yesterday and told me that George was in the hospital, remember? How's he doing now?
- Katrina: Have a seat please. He's fine now, but had a fever. They injected him with a sedative and antipyretic, so he is unconscious – it's a side effect of the medication.
- Kach: You don't look British!
- Katrina: I'm British of Indian descent.
- Kach: Yes, I see. Your Eastern beauty is clear; maybe that's why George wasn't impressed when he went to India.
- Katrina: Impressed by what?!
- Kach: Impressed by the Indian ladies of course, ha ha ha! Anyway, it seems that

you've infatuated George, congratulations.

It became clear on Katrina's face that she resented his words…

- Kach: This is the first time I've seen you; maybe George was hiding your beauty from me. Anyway, nice to meet you. I'm ready to help you any time with anything you need, and you're welcome -if you want- to work with us at the company.
- Katrina: Thank you, but I'm a teacher of theology and I'm dedicated to the church.
- Kach: With us the payment will be better, and I think you'll be more comfortable.
- Katrina: But I'm dedicated to the church and don't want to give up my job.
- Kach: It's up to you, but think about it. To be frank, George has worked hard for the company, and the board of directors are really impressed by his achievements, especially after his last trip to Tel Aviv. Can you imagine that he brilliantly managed - in two successive trips - to win the target deals and also sign the contracts with the clients with their complete satisfaction?
- Katrina: Maybe that was because of your instructions; you're his boss.
- Kach: Maybe, but I don't think so. Especially concerning my instructions for him about the women.

Just then a man knocked at the door, asking:

- The visitor: Excuse me, is this George's room?
- Katrina: Yes, I'm his wife. He's in a coma now, who're you? Come in.
- The visitor: I'm Adam, a friend of George; he called me earlier today and was fine. What happened?
- Katrina: With the kind of illness that he has he doesn't know when he's going to be sick, because his temperature can rise at any time, and that's why he had to be injected with a sedative and antipyretic which puts him into a deep coma.
- Adam: I'm so sorry. Is there anything I can do for him?
- Katrina: I really appreciate your noble feelings. Have a seat, please.
- Adam: Thank you.

When Adam walked towards Kach to shake hands with him, Kach arrogantly shook hands with him, so Adam felt rather embarrassed, and said:

- Adam: Sorry, I don't know who you are yet. .
- Kach: I'm Kach, George's boss in the company. What do you work as?
- Adam: I'm Adam; a waiter and a friend of George.
- Kach: A waiter?!

Adam's face reddened with anger, but he disciplined himself and calmly said:

- Adam: Yes, ask him when he wakes up! Friendship is based on psychological, spiritual and mental affinity, not on financial affinity.

Katrina interrupted the discussion, feeling upset by the pompous tone of Kach:

- Katrina: Never mind, Adam; George speaks about you a lot. He's very happy with your friendship, and your opinions and wisdom.
- Adam: That's so kind of him… Then he glanced towards Kach and added: But if it wasn't for his kindness, he would see me just as a waiter, as he is a highly qualified engineer!

Kach said arrogantly:

- Kach: Of course, because that's all that you are!!
- Katrina: Kach! Show some respect to George's friend.
- Kach: Ha ha ha! Show respect to a man whose income hardly equals that of my cleaner!?
- Katrina: He's George's friend and money doesn't matter; do you think that people are appreciated according to the money they own?
- Kach: You seem just like George, and sitting with a waiter doesn't suit me. Anyway, my offer is still on the table, here's my card with my number; just give me a call if you need anything. See you soon, and I hope George gets better soon.
- Katrina: Sorry about that, Adam.
- Adam: You don't have to apologize, you didn't do anything. My value is determined by what I think about myself, not by what others think about me.
- Katrina: George was right about you.
- Adam: Thanks, that's so kind of both of you.
- George: He speaks a lot about your religiosity, wisdom and advice.
- Adam: George's a true seeker of the truth, and he's going to reach it because God never lets down anyone who tries to reach the truth.
- Katrina: These words show that your trust in God are really deep; but aren't you afraid that it's possible for him to forsake all religions because of their contradictions?
- Adam: No, I don't think so.
- Katrina: Why are you so sure about that?
- Adam: Because the right religion has no contradictions, and he'll reach that religion.

- Katrina: Are you a Catholic or Protestant?
- Adam: I'd rather not answer that?
- Katrina: It's up to you, it was just a question.
- Adam: I'll visit George again tomorrow, but now please excuse me.
- Katrina: George will be so happy with your visit tomorrow, so don't be late.
- Adam: I'll try to come tomorrow or the day after, but I'll call him tomorrow in any case, see you.

The side effect of the injection began to wear off and George regained consciousness, but it was difficult for him to move his body, as if it was a dead weight. He was hardly able to open his eyes, but he had heard some of what Katrina, Adam and Kach had said. He understood some parts clearly, while other parts were jumbled up. After Adam left, George started feeling better and was about to open his eyes when he heard someone's footsteps getting closer, so he decided to keep them shut. He recognized the visitor from his voice when he greeted Katrina - it was Doctor Tom…

- Tom: How's our philosopher doing?
- Katrina: Hi Tom; he spiked a sudden fever so they injected him with a sedative, and as a side effect he's in a coma.
- Tom: I hope he gets better soon. George's a unique man and although I pick arguments with him a lot, I benefit from him more than he does from me.
- Katrina: You're his doctor, and he's much better since the first visit with you.
- Tom: It's me who's getting better; you and George maybe don't know it, but I used to be an immoral doctor who didn't care about anything except women and pleasure. And I don't know why, but George's philosophy and my reading about religions, coupled with my visits to the church with you, have really changed my life for the better! By the way, I wanted to apologize for the kiss; believe me I didn't mean to act like that. I don't know what came over me!
- Katrina: It's over. Maybe it was my mistake; I drank heavily that day.
- Tom: Sometimes we like to philosophize over the mistakes that we make that we aren't sure about or we were forced to make. Let's leave this subject now. Tell me, what has the doctor said about George's condition?
- Katrina: Things aren't clear right now; but I hope that everything will be clear to his doctors in the next couple of days.
- Tom: God will look after him; he'll be just fine.

George pretended to slowly open his eyes, as if he was just waking up and wondering where he was…

- Katrina: George, honey, you're awake!
- George: How long have I been out?
- Katrina: Three hours; the nurse told me that you had been injected just before I came. Thank God you're safe… Then she turned to Tom and said: Your doctor came to greet you and make sure you're fine.
- Tom: How are you, George?
- George: Fine, how are you Doctor?
- Tom: I'm fine. I was asking Katrina about you and she reassured me you're fine. I don't want to exhaust you now, so I'll leave, see you later.
- George: I'll be here in the hospital for a while, I guess. When will the next session be?
- Tom: It'll be here at the hospital, whenever you want.
- George: Great, then let's make it in the next few days.
- Tom: If you have the time, continue reading about divine religions to enrich our next session.
- George: Great, it's a deal.

Katrina picked up one of the books that was beside George, then smiled and said:

- Katrina: He started reading this yesterday.
- Tom: That's fantastic, George.
- George: I'll try to fill my long stay here with dialogues… He turned to Katrina and smiled… but she doesn't like discussions and ends them quickly.

Katrina blushed and said:

- Katrina: I'll try my best not to end them.
- Tom: Ha ha ha! Very good. I'll visit you more than once, if I'm able to, so that we can have a discussion. I wish you a speedy recovery, but I must go now.

After Tom left Katrina turned to George, smiling:

- Katrina: Sorry about ending the discussions honey, help me to stop doing that.
- George: I was kidding.
- Katrina: But you're right… I wanted to ask you: tell me about that rude man Kach who says he's your Boss?
- George: What about him?

- Katrina: He came today and behaved so indecently; if it wasn't for your sake, I would have kicked him out.
- George: For my sake! You should've kicked him out! Oh how I hate him! What did he do?
- Katrina: He's just so rude; his looks, his words, behavior, his gestures, everything about him is rude. Can you imagine that he looked down on Adam as he is a waiter, and spoke inappropriately to the nurse!?
- George: Did Adam come?
- Katrina: Yes and he was so polite, although Kach was so disrespectful to him.
- George: Sometimes I feel that Kach is the exact opposite to Adam.
- Katrina: Despite his young age and simple job, Adam talks with the wisdom of the elders and philosophers.
- George: So was I right about what I told you about him?
- Katrina: You absolutely hit the nail on the head about him. I love you George; Kach told me that you're unlike him concerning women - that you're decent.
- George: And what about the charming Urmila and the pretty Levvi?
- Katrina: I trust you, honey, and trust your morals; do you trust me?
- George: I do.
- Katrina: And my evenings with Tom?
- George: Tom told me about what happened between you and him the last time you two met.
- Katrina: Believe me; I don't know how it happened!
- George: Oh… we make many mistakes and don't know how we make them, but I'm sure of your religiosity and morals, honey.
- Katrina: I love you, George.

She looked at her watch and said:

- Katrina: I have to leave now, but I'll return tomorrow.
- George: See you, and remember you've promised to discuss with me without ending our conversations abruptly, because I want to discuss with you "neither let her drink wine or strong drink, ", as it is stated in the Gospel.
- Katrina: Okay honey, I promise to be honest with you about that.
- George: Good, we both agree on that, honey.

(5)

After Katrina left, George closed his eyes trying to recollect what he had heard when he was regaining consciousness. He clearly heard the words of Tom, more than the others, especially concerning what he said about him changing, thanks to George, with a tone of truth which greatly surprised him.

He could remember some of what Kach said and his arrogance and disdain towards Adam, while Adam replied politely in return. He smiled when he remembered how Kach praised him for signing the contracts and how impressed the board of directors were. He wondered: "Will I be courageous enough to resign from the company after I'm released from the hospital, and stop being an immoral tool in the hands of Kach? Or will the love of money beat my principles?"

He was totally absorbed in his thoughts when he heard the voice of the nurse asking him:

- The nurse: Hello George. How is your temperature now?
- George: I'm much better, thank you.
- The nurse: We expected you to wake up sooner than this.
- George: Actually, I was awake, but felt so tired that I didn't open my eyes.
- The nurse: Okay then, no problem, and your temperature now is fine. Excuse me, I have other patients to check.
- George: Thank you, and sorry for the rudeness of my visitor; my wife told me about it.
- The nurse: It was another nurse on duty not me, but anyway, we're used to such people, so don't worry about that. And thanks for your kindness. My name's Zinta, you can call me anytime if you need anything.
- George: Zinta …your name's unusual.
- The nurse: I have Austrian, not British, roots.
- George: I know another Austrian and she's kind, just like you.
- The nurse: That's odd; there are only a few Austrians here.
- George: Levvi doesn't live here; I met her in Tel Aviv.
- The nurse: A Jew! The Jews corrupted Europe, so we got rid of them by giving them to Palestine and Jerusalem.
- George: You seem to be prejudiced.
- The nurse: Maybe, but you haven't lived among them for long enough and don't know what it's like... anyway, if you need me, you can call me anytime. You'll

have dinner now because you didn't have lunch, and then you should have some rest.

- George: Thank you.
- The nurse: Any time, Mr. George.

George woke up the next morning feeling full of energy and vitality, something he hadn't felt in a while. He even wished that he could leave the hospital, as his stay was becoming boring. He ate his breakfast earlier than usual and then began to read, waiting for the doctor. He decided to make some comparisons between Judaism and Christianity, and read about the status of women in Christianity compared to that of Judaism. He wanted to discuss this issue with Katrina, and maybe with Habib and Levvi too.

When the doctor came George greeted him and asked:

- George: Have the latest test results revealed anything new?
- Doctor: Some results are already available and some aren't yet, but don't worry.
- George: I'm not worried at all, it was just a question; what about the available results?
- Doctor: We have to wait for the rest of the results before making the final diagnosis, but I don't want you to worry about this now. Though it is possible that you'll need to undergo surgery.
- George: Surgery?!
- Doctor: Please don't be worried; the cure lies only with God; we're just the instruments.
- George: Believe me, I'm not worried at all; I'm just surprised that my condition has worsened so suddenly.
- Doctor: I know. The nurse tells me that she always sees you reading and discussing, and never sees you depressed, which is fantastic. We're waiting for the results tomorrow or the day after, at the latest.
- George: I'll be waiting and I'm sure that everything is going to be just fine.
- Doctor: Great, you're right. But would you explain to me how come you're so confident?
- George: I have no doubt that God is the most Merciful.
- Doctor: So you're religious… that's it! Generally the religious are more likely to be happy and comfortable than the atheist patients, who believe that they have only one life to live.
- George: I didn't mean that; all I meant was that God is merciful towards us in this life. But even if what you said has a deep meaning, i.e. a believer believes

in another life in the hereafter, this view is confined only to those who believe in divine religions.

- Doctor: Sorry, you are starting to philosophize and I don’t have much time, but tell me in short: why don’t those of other religions, like Buddhists and Hindus, have that view of life?
- George: Because they don’t believe there is another life; instead, they believe that their souls transfer to others.
- Doctor: Ha ha ha! A primitive dogma. In spite of your very interesting talk, I have to leave now, duty beckons.

George was occupied once again with reading and analyzing matters when Adam called …

- George: Hi, Adam; Katrina told me that you came. Thanks for your visit.
- Adam: Is there anything I can do for you, my friend?
- George: It’s so kind of you to ask, Adam. I’m grateful to you, but be sure that if I need anything I’ll tell you… hold on a second, I remember, there was something…
- Adam: Anything George; I’m really happy, you make me feel like we’re true friends.
- George: I want to see you; I have many things that I want to discuss with you.
- Adam: Okay, but I’m sorry I can’t come today as we have double the amount of work in the café, since one of the waiters is off sick.
- George: That’s okay, I’ll wait for you tomorrow.

After George ended the call, Katrina arrived with a big cheerful smile…

- Katrina: How’s my honey today?
- George: I feel much better; what about you?
- Katrina: All I can say is thank God for His graces.
- George: What graces do you mean?
- Katrina: The grace of religion and being busy with the church and… and the grace of you being my husband.
- George: So you think religion is a grace?
- Katrina: Absolutely; being without God is the worst thing ever.
- George: Then what do you think about atheists?
- Katrina: Honestly, and from my point of view; atheism is a disease rather than a religion; it harms the self and the soul, the mind and one’s reasoning, and the universe and creation.
- George: I completely agree with you, but how can being sick be a grace?

- Katrina: I meant the grace of you being my husband, not of you being sick.
- George: And what is the grace in that?
- Katrina: I mean that some men insult women and don't appreciate them; they aren't faithful like you, honey.
- George: Isn't insulting woman directly connected to religion?
- Katrina: What do you mean?
- George: The more religious you are, the more you should insult women.
- Katrina: Again, who told you that?
- George: The teachings of Judaism illustrate women with the worst type of descriptions.
- Katrina: You've just said Judaism, so why do you generalize this with Christianity?
- George: Paul said in Corinthians in his first epistle: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be submissive," didn't he?
- Katrina: Now you seem to be a theologian!
- George: I told you that I'd read about Christianity during my stay, didn't I? And didn't Tom tell me to do that in front of you?
- Katrina: Good… that'll make you more religious, and maybe make you convert to Catholicism instead of Protestantism.
- George: Maybe, but let's return to our subject; honestly, isn't the status of women in Christianity contemptible, just like Judaism?
- Katrina: I've promised you to be honest and to continue discussing things with you, so I'll continue, although I don't like what I have to say.
- George: I don't want you to do something that you don't like, so I'll excuse you for that reason.
- Katrina: No, I'll continue because you need to submit to God, and I need to reason and think.
- George: You're right; there's no belief without submission, but God is Just and can't charge us to believe in contradictions or any irrational orders.
- Katrina: What do you mean?
- George: Can a true religion be irrational?
- Katrina: Give me an example?
- George: Such as a god that is weak or that needs his slaves, or a god whom his slaves kill; how could such a being be a true god?
- Katrina: Although the implications of what you say are really serious, you have

a point.

- George: What implications do you mean?
- Katrina: That's not what we are talking about now; we were discussing the status of women in Christianity, weren't we?
- George: Yes…
- Katrina: To be frank, I've always wished I could be a man, because in Christianity the woman is of a lower class.
- George: Oh, just like Judaism?
- Katrina: Perhaps not as much as Judaism; but it is the altered Torah and Talmud that have such crude teachings and are full of sexual accounts that are impossible to believe… also women in the Gospel are lower than men, and it contains some awful things concerning her, but they aren't as bad as that of Judaism.
- George: I know some crude teachings of the Old Testament.
- Katrina: Like what?
- George: The woman is handed down like property: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them dies, and has no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry outside unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him as wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her," also she has no right of heritance: "And you shall speak unto the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter," and about the menstruating woman: "And whoever touches those things (the menstruating woman) shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until evening." It that enough, or do you want more?
- Katrina: Enough… enough… in fact, Christianity has set the woman free from her position in Judaism. Although the position of women is tragic in Christianity, it's much better than it is in Judaism.
- George: How is that so?
- Katrina: The Jews, in the era of Christ, allowed the man to divorce his wife for the most insignificant reasons; such as spoiling the food. But Christianity gave the woman her rights; Christ confined the reason for divorce to only adultery, and so he set her free from the control of men and protected her from his whims.
- George: That's good… can you mention more examples?
- Katrina: In fact, just as the Bible is full of such texts that you mentioned, it is also full of other texts that honor women.
- George: And what are the true texts, those which are from God? It doesn't make

sense that the texts are from God and are contradictory at the same time!

- Katrina: You brought up a topic which is even more difficult; believe me, I'm not trying to escape the discussion, I'm just really tired.
- George: What is the topic which is difficult and we'll discuss it later.
- Katrina: It's the topic cocnerning which texts are from God and which have been altered by people.
- George: Okay, let's end the discussion for now and finish it later, another time.
- Katrina: Will you tell me about the Church of the Resurrection now?
- George: Sure. I went to it as I promised you on Friday, and there was a huge traffic jam…

They were interrupted by Brad, who came to visit George.

- Brad: Hi George… hi Katrina.
- George: Hi.
- Brad: I heard that you were sick and thought maybe you would need me.
- George: Thanks.

Brad turned to Katrina and said, mischievously:

- Brad: Oh you're here; I thought you'd be with Tom.
- Katrina: What do you mean?
- Brad: Nothing, don't get upset, ma'am.

George sat up and said:

- George: This matter has nothing to do with you, Brad.
- Brad: Maybe, but Tom often talks about Katrina and how beautiful she is, so I expected her to be with him.

George said, angrily:

- George: You're such a liar, and rude as well.
- Brad: Tom also told me that you wanted to go to Tora Bora; is he a liar too?

Katrina said: Tora Bora?!

- George: Don't make me mad. Thanks for your visit and please go now, I want to rest.
- Brad: I'm leaving now, but don't let Tom deceive you with his sweet words, he's a specialist in playing with words. I can tell you about all the women he had affairs with… and as you know George, I have a solution for all your problems. I'll be waiting for your call, bye.

Once Brad left, Katrina sank into the chair, sighing…

- Katrina: I hate that man.
- George: Me too; he doesn't have any morals or principles at all.

- Katrina: But what did he mean?
- George: About what?
- Katrina: Do you really want to go to Tora Bora?
- George: Ha ha ha! Do you even know what Tora Bora is?
- Katrina: Yes, it’s a mountain for terrorists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Anyhow, what has it got to do with you?
- George: Something strange happened. Tom was talking with me about religions and Islam, and he jokingly said to me that if I converted to Islam I would go to Tora Bora. Then on my way out I was surprised when Brad asked me if I was going to Tora Bora.
- Katrina: He and Tom are lying; don’t believe what they say about me.
- George: I know that Brad is lying, but as for Tom, he told me about the kiss and told me that he didn’t mean it. And I don’t know why, but I feel that I believe him.
- Katrina: Regrettably, Tom’s right about that, but it was my fault more than his; if I hadn’t been drinking, he’d never have dared to do that.
- George: I can understand that Tom’s behavior was involuntary, but what I can’t really understand is your insistence on drinking wine!
- Katrina: Really?…
- George: And even more strange is what you said to our son about wine: “Now drink no wine or similar drink.”?
- Katrina: Man may philosophize or rationalize his mistakes- at least to himself- but I’ll be honest with you.
- George: Sorry for interrupting you, but what do you mean by philosophizing and rationalizing mistakes?
- Katrina: I mean that there are many teachings of the religion that we don’t know and many others that we know and choose to disobey, but the problem is that we don’t want to admit our mistakes, so we search for rational or philosophical and even religious interpretations in order not to appear mistaken. Maybe the clearest example of that is wine in Catholicism.
- George: Explain it to me more.
- Katrina: The rule on this issue is that it is forbidden to drink wine in both the New and the Old Testaments. The Old Testament says: “It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the justice of any of th afflicted” and also the New Testament: “And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”
- George: Then wine is essentially forbidden, but does this rule have exceptions?

- Katrina: Don't mock me; I'll be honest with you. It mentions in the Old and the New Testaments that the prophets drank wine, so we drink it in the church and justify our actions by referring to what Jesus said in John's Gospel: "I am the true vine", and what he also said about his followers: "you are the branches." So just as the juice of his vine slides into the branches to nourish them, the Christ used the vine's juice to refer to his sacred blood that we drink to make it glide into our veins to sanctify our blood and our soul. And Christ didn't give us the vine's juice to enjoy it or to get drunk with it, but he gave it to us for a sacred purpose, which is a pure secret that only the believers appreciate.
- George: Oh… creative philosophy!
- Katrina: Stop mocking me, or I won't go on.
- George: Ha ha ha! Okay, so drinking wine became sacred!
- Katrina: See how we philosophize and rationalize what we want in order to make it part of religion?
- George: But this is only acceptable in a made-up religion which has been written according to what its makers want, but it is not acceptable for a divine religion from God.
- Katrina: Oh, you never get tired of discussing, but I have to go home to see Michael and Sally. I'll try to come back to continue our discussions, but you're going to need to lower the tone a little with me, because it affects me emotionally if they are matters that highlight the contradictions with our inner selves, even more so than the contradictions in the religion itself .
- George: I'll be waiting, honey, and sorry for exhausting you. I don't want you to tire yourself by coming back straight away. If you aren't able to come back today, it's okay.

Katrina kissed George on the forehead and cheeks, and left. She was so happy with their discussion; for the first time she felt that she had expressed herself and that her mind had triumphed over her emotions. George was also very happy that he had discovered the extraordinary philosophical, rational and scientific skills of Katrina, which had been covered by abstract submission. George was going over the discussion once again; it was profound. He smiled remembering how Katrina managed to divert the question of "why does she drink wine?" so creatively, feeling unembarrassed.

Optimism and Anticipation

10

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(1)

George was absorbed in reading about Christianity, he concentrated on the correctness of the New and Old Testament and finding out what had been added to them. He felt that he tended to avoid this issue because it was so sensitive, but he felt that it was important to study it deeply, to make sure that his holy book is actually correct. One of the most difficult matters he discovered, though, was that this holy book contained many dubious accounts. George continued reading until lunch; he was so absorbed in his study that he ate his food while reading. A nurse passed by to take his temperature while he was so engrossed in reading, so she said to him:

- The nurse: You look like a student that has an exam!
- George laughed and said: Oh yes, I am a student in the school of life, either to succeed and be happy, or fail and be miserable.
- The nurse: You seem to be a philosopher!
- George: What matters is that I pass the test.
- The nurse: Passing the test of life is difficult; unfortunately most people seem to fail in it.
- George: Why?
- The nurse: Because they want to. They don't want to succeed.
- George: Either you are philosophizing, or you are saying strange words that contradict reality.
- The nurse: I am philosophizing. But will you excuse me now, I have work to do.

George smiled. He was astonished at her way of talking: how she talked deeply on philosophy, but finished the conversation so abruptly and then went away. What did she mean by saying that most of the people want to fail in the test of life? Did that make any sense?! In any event, she was there with him in the hospital, and he would ask her when he saw her again.

Tom entered the room while George was once again absorbed in reading. George did not notice Tom until he stood beside him and stroked his shoulder, with a smile on his face.

- Tom: You must have learnt all about Christianity, and all of its denominations.
- George: Welcome, Tom.
- Tom: How are you today?
- George: I am fine, as you can see; I didn’t expect that you’d pass by today.
- Tom: I chose this time because I thought that Katrina would most probably not be here.
- George: Why?
- Tom: I think I made a mistake when I kissed her, I don’t know why I did it, and I feel that you don’t want me to see her. I know you probably don’t believe a word of what I am saying, and it is your right to think that way.

George smiled and said:

- George: No problem, but why did you tell Brad that you love Katrina and that you always kiss her, and you enjoy it so much?
- Tom: Did I say that?!
- George: This is what your office manager, Brad, implied when he visited me earlier today.
- Tom: You didn’t believe me before, so how will you believe me now? He is a mean liar.
- George: But you are talking about your office manager! Anyhow, he said these words to me this morning, in front of Katrina. Didn’t you also tell him that I was going to Tora Bora? Or did he guess that we were talking about this too?
- Tom: Oh, now I’ll have to tell you some things, although I didn’t want to.
- George: Continue…
- Tom: I know that my office manager or secretary, Brad, is bad and immoral, and I was silent about that because he used to help me in manipulating women. Believe me, I don’t know why but I have changed since your first visit; my readings and researches have been directed to debates on religion and on matters that bring happiness. But Brad did not like that and he had many conversations about that with me, and he even threatened me with some old photos he had of me with some of the patients. Then I discovered that he had fixed a camera to spy and listen to what I say to the patients in my room, and he knows what I do and say to people in my clinic. I only learned that three days ago, and we had a fierce disagreement about it. I threatened to expel him from work, and then he threatened that he would post all of my photos and records on the web. If this happens, my medical

license will be revoked, and I don't know what to do now! Do you believe what I'm saying? I would pardon you if you didn't.

- George: Although this story does seem imaginary, I have some evidence that supports what you say.
- Tom: What evidence?
- George: During my last visit to you, Brad met me just when I was leaving, and he talked to me about Tora Bora. I am sure that you never came out of the room during the session, and that he didn't enter.
- Tom: Why didn't you tell me?
- George: What he said made me very surprised, but I thought that maybe it was just coincidence or what they call remote telepathy.
- Tom: Believe me I just told you the whole truth, and now it is up to you to believe me or not.

The nurse knocked at the door and rushed in.

- The nurse: Sorry for interrupting, but the doctor wants to talk to you urgently; he is on his way to you now.
- George: He is welcome, but what is the matter?

The doctor arrived.

- Doctor: Hello George. Sorry for this sudden visit, but it's urgent.
- George: Go ahead Doctor.
- Doctor: I reviewed the results of the rest of your medical tests, and you need an urgent operation tomorrow.
- George: This seems critical.
- Doctor: Actually, I have to agree with you on that, that's why I came to see you now. You have a chance to think about it and sign your consent before 12:00 pm tomorrow.
- George: Thinking and signing a consent!
- Doctor: I'll have to explain things clearly to you and in more detail: we found that the viruses that causes the fever also causes damage to some parts of the brain whenever you get the fever. We expect that this is going to happen tomorrow at 8:00 pm, which means that it will happen during the operation. The bad news is that the success rate of the operation is only 60%, unfortunately.
- George: What about the other 40%?!
- Doctor: There could be some disorder in some parts of the brain.

- George: What does that mean?
- Doctor: Sorry, I cannot predict that now. Maybe nothing will happen, or may be there will be some unwanted consequences after the surgery.
- George: And you’re asking me to agree and sign a consent to this!
- Doctor: Yes.
- George: What if I don’t agree to have the operation?
- Doctor: You will have to sign a form declaring that you were advised to have the surgery, but you refused. Though in my humble opinion I think it is better for you to have the operation, though we have never dealt with such a case before. Do you have any further questions?
- George: No, unless you have any more important information about the surgery.
- Doctor: No, nothing more. I only informed you after consulting the medical team, and that was their opinion. If you want to ask any more questions at any time, please tell the nurse and she will call me at once to answer you. I hope that you will think about it and sign the consent before 12:00 pm tomorrow.
- George: I’ll think about it and consult with others, then I’ll give you my answer.
- Doctor: It is best to take matters easy, as you normally do, and not to worry too much. Life, death, and illness are different aspects of the lives of human beings, and one has to live with this fact. Excuse me for now. I’ll visit you tomorrow at 9:00 am. If you have any question before then, please ask the nurse.
- George: Thank you Doctor.

The doctor left and George was drowned in silence until Tom’s voice interrupted his thoughts.

- Tom: George, life has no meaning unless we are happy, just as death has no meaning if we don’t believe in resurrection and the reckoning! How strange the philosophy of life and death is!
- George: Truly, how strange the philosophy of existence is! Why were we created? And what is our final destination!
- Tom: So what are you thinking about?
- George: I was wondering if I wanted to live or die.
- Tom: You don’t need to think about that, no one wants death.
- George: Why do people commit suicide? Hasn’t the percentage of suicide increased in the whole world? Didn’t I even want to commit suicide one day?
- Tom: How strange you are, George! The one who commits suicide ends his mis-

ery with another misery, but happy people don’t need that at all.

- George: When I wanted to commit suicide the whole world seemed too narrow, my misery had no limit; I wanted to end my misery with another misery, as you said.
- Tom: Are you still miserable now to need to choose between life and death?
- George: Actually, I started to feel happy when I began to travel on the path to happiness, and I keep asking myself: “So how would it feel if I actually reached happiness?”
- Tom: So hold on to life to attain happiness.
- George: I want life, but the question is; does life want me? I saw Mary struggling for life, but death defeated her.
- Tom: Trust God and He will help you.
- George: Ha ha ha! You have become confidently religious, Tom!
- Tom: Didn’t I tell you that I have changed? Believe me, I didn’t expect to change, and I never planned to. I don’t know when I changed, but I really have!
- George: In spite of my problems, I want to know; were you happier before or are you happier now?
- Tom: I can answer the question that you mailed me before about the pleasure of the body and soul; I used to obtain physical pleasure by making my soul miserable, and so my body became miserable as well!
- George: And now?
- Tom: I haven’t reach happiness, but at least I am not as miserable as before.
- George: If you were in my shoes, would you prefer life or death?
- Tom: Life, without any doubt. But maybe if you had asked me that question earlier, I would have said death. The misery of death ends the misery of life.
- George: Do you remember when I met the old man on my way to commit suicide, he was very happy, and enjoyed playing with his grandson very much. I wish I had taken down his address.
- Tom: For now I think that you should sign the consent, the doctors know more than we do. But I suggest that you consult Katrina first.
- George: I think so too, though I have to make some arrangements, as the percentage of failure of the surgery is 40%.
- Tom: Be optimistic, everything will be just fine, but it is okay to be ready for everything. You will recover and reach happiness, but don’t forget to take me

with you. I'll leave you now to give you time to think. I'll come back tomorrow to make sure you are fine, excuse me.

George lay back and thought deeply about the meaning of death, whether he might stand up to the death that his daughter Mary had confronted in front of him, and what is the meaning of death, anyhow? Moreover, what is the meaning of life? Is death a relief of the misery of life? Or is it the end of the happiness of life? If it is the first then death is most welcomed, and if it is the second that means he has reached happiness. Knowing that, he smiled sarcastically at his train of thoughts. He told himself: "It seems that I will die while I am just philosophizing, and reach nothing."

His phone rang and interrupted his thoughts. Adam was on the phone.

- George: Hello!
- Adam: Hello George, I just wanted to make sure that you are fine, how are you?
- George: I am somewhere between life and death, I don't know which is nearer?
- Adam: I don't understand you, how is that?
- George: 60% life and 40% death or physical disability.
- Adam: I don't understand what you mean, and if you are joking; I don't like those kind of jokes.
- George: I wish I was joking but this is the truth. I've been advised to have surgery tomorrow with only a 60% chance of success.
- Adam: We have to praise God for everything.
- George: How much I wish I could see you today.
- Adam: It seems that it is impossible today as visiting hours are over. Why didn't you call me earlier?
- George: I don't know; can you pay me a visit tomorrow morning?
- Adam: Sure I'll come, I would have come now if I could have, but be sure that only God knows how long anyone will live, and not the doctors, though they are an important precautionary measure.
- George: I don't know, am I afraid of death, or don't I care? All I know is that death is a gigantic fact that changes life completely.
- Tom: Don't be afraid or panic; God is more merciful to us than we are to ourselves.
- George: Believe me, I don't know if I'm afraid or disturbed, or what's wrong with me? I feel that I have to rearrange my whole life again. Don't you see how I have

made fun of myself?

- Adam: What do you mean by making fun of yourself?
- George: Well, when I became afraid of death, I decided to rearrange my life. But the irony is that shouldn't I have done that when I was starting life, not leaving it?
- Adam: You were seeking to rearrange your life before, and you should rearrange what's left, though only God knows how much is actually left…but I like to be optimistic and I hate being pessimistic.
- George: I'm somewhat disturbed. Do you expect that I'll die?
- Adam: God willing, you will live, and you'll stay on this earth until you find that happiness that you are pursuing, only then will life on earth and life after death have a meaning.
- George: Good expression "Our life after death", maybe I'll discuss that with you tomorrow. Excuse me, I have to call Katrina and tell her what the doctor said.
- Adam: Oh yes of course, you have to consult your wife. I'm sorry for taking so much of your time. I'll leave you in God's care. Goodbye.
- George: I'm very grateful Adam. I'll see you tomorrow morning, good bye.

After the call, Adam's words echoed through George's head, and he repeated them unconsciously: "Only God knows how long anyone will live, and not the doctors," "God is more merciful to us than we are to ourselves," "I like to be optimistic and I hate being hate pessimistic", "When we are happy, life on earth and life after death will have a meaning." George didn't know why Adam's simple yet deep words always shattered him from inside? Had the secret been in his words or in his honesty? Or was it a result of his disturbing condition which he could not come to terms with?

George stopped himself from thinking too hard as he had to call Katrina to tell her about the operation and ask for her advice on the matter. George picked up the phone and dialed Katrina:

- George: Hello Katrina, how are you? I miss you and I waited for you today.
- Katrina: Sorry darling, I was on my way but something came up.
- George: Oh, okay: I hope that everything is alright?
- Katrina: Actually, Sally had some homework and she asked for my help.
- George: Where are you now?
- Katrina: At home, what's wrong George?
- George: I just wanted your advice about something: the doctor told me that I

needed to have an operation tomorrow, if I approve.

- Katrina: Tomorrow!? But why so soon? And what operation?
- George: All the doctor said is that it's better to have it tomorrow at 8:00 pm.
- Katrina: Oh honey! What are you saying? I'll come to the hospital immediately to discuss things together.
- George: I think it's better if you come tomorrow morning.
- Katrina: What kind of surgery?
- George: Brain surgery.
- Katrina: Brain surgery!! Is it critical?
- George: Maybe, what matters is that the doctor told me that I have to go through the operation, although there's only a 60% chance that the operation will be successful. What do you think I should do?
- Katrina: I really don't know, it's such an important decision and I can't advise you without having a proper discussion about all the facts and details, but what I can do is pray for you all night. I'll come tomorrow early, and bring Sally and Michael along.
- George: See you tomorrow darling, good bye.

Katrina threw herself on the bed weeping. She couldn't imagine her life without George. What if the operation failed? What if he had a physical disability? Then, she left her bed and started to pray for him.

As for George, he was busy thinking about Katrina and the kids, and their financial situation. He smiled when he remembered that he had renewed his life insurance policy, which meant that there would be a good sum of money for them. Furthermore, his contract at work also assured him a good amount of money, especially since he grew ill during a business trip, and he could prove that, though he had serious doubts that Kach would give him anything if he died, since Kach was the type who only thought about himself. Finally, while these thoughts were turning in his head, he fell asleep.

(2)

George woke up early. He had his breakfast feeling that his head was heavily laden with thoughts and questions that kept storming it. He decided that he would most probably have the operation, but he was overwhelmed with worry. He asked himself what he should do before the operation, and all the while Ka-

trina and the kids never left his mind.

Just as the morning visiting hours began, he noticed Adam coming into the room with a friendly smile upon his face.

- Adam: Make me happy and tell me that you're well today.
- George: I am fine. There's nothing new, I'm waiting for the doctor. I expect that he'll be here soon, although there is nothing in his hands that he can do.
- Adam: You're right; the doctor has no power, in fact all human beings have no power.
- George: So, who controls everything then?
- Adam: Everything is in God's hands.
- George: Who is your God Adam?
- Adam: My God is your God, and the God of everyone; let's not talk about that now.
- George: So are you Protestant?!
- Adam: When you reach your goal in your efforts to find happiness, I'll be with you.
- George: That is if I live after the operation.
- Adam: Be optimistic…optimistic. I hate pessimism.
- George: The worldly existence is built on pessimism; why do you refuse it?
- Adam: No! The worldly existence is built only on optimism, so let those fables go.
- George: Be honest with me, aren't you superstitious of the number 13?
- Adam: Of course not. God is the only one that runs this world. By the way, Chinese people think of the number 13 as being good; because its phonetics is similar to a phrase that means: I must live. These are only fables, and are far away from God's way.
- George: Seeing as you are Protestant, Adam, aren't you scared of the date, especially if it is Friday the 13th? Do you know that the last secret meeting between Jesus and his disciples in Christian history, just before Judas betrayed him by revealing his whereabouts, was on Friday and there were thirteen men that attended?
- Adam: I don't believe in fables, I came to make sure that you're okay, not to discuss pessimism and optimism with you; and I would like to know and think that my friend is always optimistic.

- George: How do you want me to be optimistic while I only have a 60% chance?!
- Adam: God is merciful and generous, everything is in God's hands; doctors can only do their job; if you're hopeful you will be happier, and then you will lead a better life and the percentage of success of the surgery will increase. But if you're negative your position will only worsen, and you'll only get what God wants you to have, anyhow. What's wrong with you George, you're not being yourself today?
- George: I was only testing you, to see what you would say. I also hate fables, and I've learned from you how to love optimism… but tell me, how can a man in my position be optimistic?

Katrina burst through the doors with Michael and Sally, who rushed eagerly to George's bed.

- Katrina: I hope you'll be fine George, how are you now?
- Sally: Dad, how are you? We've been so worried about you!
- Michael: Dad, what happened to you?

Adam preferred to leave the room for the family to have some private time with their dad before the operation.

- Adam: Excuse me; I'll go now and let you have some family time.
- Katrina: Oh, hello Adam… Sorry I didn't greet you.
- George: No, no, please don't leave; I want you to stay, unless you have something urgent to do.
- Adam: I'm not in a hurry, but I don't want to cause any disturbance.
- Katrina: There's no disturbance at all, we are happy that you are here.

George asked Michael and Sally to sit with him on the bed, and he asked them about school and home.

- The kids: We are fine Dad, when are you coming home?
- The kids: Mum said that you'll come home in three days, and that soon after that we'll travel to Rome.
- Katrina: I booked the tickets, and we'll travel in ten days.
- George: You booked the tickets?! How?! I don't think I can do it, my current health doesn't allow me to travel.
- Katrina: Don't worry darling, you'll be fine.
- Katrina: What do you think, Adam?
- Adam: A blessed decision, God willingly you will be able to travel. And this is the

answer to your question.

- George: What question?
- Adam: Didn't you ask me how to be optimistic in such circumstances?
- George: Leaving everything in the hands of the Merciful and Generous God will make us feel relief in our lives.

Katrina held her tears back, and said:

- Katrina: I spent the whole night praying and crying for you, and then I came to the conclusion that my weeping won't do anything, but my prayers might. I was a little bit late as I was booking the tickets. So what do you think, George?
- George: I'm so happy of what you did Katrina… so tell me, pretty Sally, are you enthusiastic about going to Rome?
- Sally: Very much Dad, I want to see Trevi fountain.
- George: And what is that?
- Sally: A big fountain that we studied in geography.
- Michael: I want to see Saint Angleo castle. It is the castle that was built for the ashes of the emperors, and then it became a museum, as I learnt in geography.
- Katrina: And I want to see Saint Peter's Cathedral.
- George: Everything seems to be arranged… I hope all your dreams come true.

The kids shouted cheerfully and kissed their parents, and in the meanwhile Adam took a step aside and sat on a chair in the corner of the room to give the family some privacy as they continued their conversation, enthusiastically and happily, about travelling. Then Katrina said to the kids:

- Katrina: It is nine o'clock now, dears, and the driver is waiting for you outside.

The kids gave their father a kiss goodbye and they bid him farewell, and George said to them:

- George: Goodbye, dear children.

George turned to Adam, who was sitting by himself, and said:

- George: Sorry Adam… are you annoyed?
- Adam: Annoyed? Why?
- George: Because we are travelling to Rome, as you are a Protestant and not a Catholic.
- Adam: No, I'm not annoyed. In fact I urge you to travel to have the chance to learnt about Christianity and all its denominationa more deeply.
- George: You are such a strange person, Adam?!

- Adam: If we truly want to pursue happiness, then every effort and piece of information will make the path clearer, and we should be keen to gather any information. Didn't I urge you to visit India and Jerusalem before? So what's different now?
- George: But now is different as there has been revenge and fighting between the Catholics and us… Didn't the Protestants kill millions of Catholics in the thirty-year war?
- Adam: No one likes killing in such a savage way, and why do you think I am Protestant? Maybe I am Catholic? I'll tell you when you come back from Rome.
- George: It seems that you are Catholic; there are many similarities between you and Katrina… I'll get to know more about Catholicism by reading in the coming days and during my trip, though my first impression about it is that it has strange paganistic views, and the thing that I don't like about it is that its churches are full of pictures, just like idolatrous temples.
- Adam: And do you like Protestantism that kills people?!
- George: This makes me certain that you are Catholic.
- Adam: This is not what I mean. In your search for happiness, you must also search for the truth about any group. Only then will you find happiness, comfort, and tranquility.

Katrina came back to the room after seeing her kids off.

- Katrina: I apologize for being late. Michael and Sally asked for some juice and sandwiches before they left with the driver.
- George: I am very grateful to you Katrina for arranging this trip; you took away the fear of death that was overwhelming me.
- Katrina: When the soul of the human being is elevated, and reality has been revealed in front of him, and he knows that death is a part of reality, and that it is possible at any time, he no longer becomes a prisoner of life's pleasures and attractions, and the aspects of the world are no longer the focus of his thinking and attention. The human being that is aware of his existence and destiny can easily recognize that he lives to die, and then dies to live forever.
- George: Great philosophy: we live to die, and die to live, but the problem is the pain of death.
- Katrina: Jesus bore pain for the sake of humans, pain is a main part of eternal salvation, and our tolerance of pain is evidence of our love for Jesus.

- George: Why do we have this worldly existence then?
- Katrina: It is only useful when it is used in the service of God – and only in the service of God.
- George: What do you think, Adam?
- Adam: About what?
- George: About that life should be completely devoted to God and for seeking His gratification.
- Adam: I totally agree with that, though I think that serving God isn't only through praying.

With admiration, Katrina said:

- Katrina: Great words Adam. Unfortunately we many times forget – and even the priests too- that all our life is a form of worship, and all our lives must be devoted to God.

George smiled sarcastically and said:

- George:And the frequently repeated question remains: who really worships the Merciful God? And who worships an idol or imagery, and calls it God?

Adam said firmly:

- Adam: Perhaps this is the most critical question in history!
- Katrina: It seems that you are referring to the disagreement we have concerning God.
- George: What do you mean?
- Katrina: The Christians all agree that God is a trinity, and we agree that the first is the father, the second is the son, and the third is the Holy Spirit, the three together being one God, even if we disagree on the exact nature of the son and the Holy Spirit.
- George: This isn't what I meant, and it didn't even come to my mind. I try not to think about that point as I don't understand how the three are one, and the one is three, and how all are equal in essence, different in nature, and still all of them are God?!
- Katrina: This is one of the most difficult issues in Christianity, and I suggest that we discuss it in Rome. It is controversial and we can't discuss it here.
- George: Okay, although I don't understand how we can spend our lives worshipping a God that we don't clearly know, and in fact is difficult to understand? Sometimes I don't see any difference between us and the idolaters!!

- Katrina: Believe me, I'm not avoiding the discussion. This is a general problem that all Christians face regardless of their denomination, that's why I think we should rather discuss it in Rome.

Adam smiled and said:

- Adam: I agree with Katrina, this issue is critical, and shouldn't be dealt with quickly. No one who has any mind can continue in an idolatrous religion, and no truly divine religion is an idolatrous religion.
- George: Ha ha ha! So I agree with you, my Catholic friend. Although I believe that all Christians are pagan sometimes!

Katrina said with amazement:

- Katrina: Are you Catholic, Adam?
- Adam: Sometimes they call me Catholic, and other times Protestant.
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! Now I'm sure that you are Catholic…

The doctor entered the room while George was laughing… He approached George's bed smiling, and said:

- Doctor: Hello! I was certain that I would find you happy, regardless of what I had told you.
- George: Welcome Doctor, but why were you so certain?
- Doctor: Any cultured religious man would've definitely surrendered to God.
- George: But who is God?
- Doctor: I told you before that you are a philosopher. I'm Christian and I avoid this question, as I don't know the answer, though I have exerted a great amount of effort to try to find it; but I am certain of the existence of the Merciful and Capable God, and that's enough for me.
- George: I, on the other hand, have never felt that this is enough. How can I worship something that I don't know?
- Doctor: Now you are philosophizing! Listen: I need to know if you've signed the consent form yet?
- George: Not yet, but I'm ready to sign it now, aren't I Katrina?
- Katrina: Is there anything that we could do to enhance the results of the surgery? Or should we go to a better place?
- Doctor: Perhaps, but you're too late. There's another hospital in Germany, but anyway it is impossible to go there now because the surgery must be done immediately. We've also contacted the other consultant in Germany and he told us

about the matters that might enhance the results of the surgery. That's all; I have nothing more to say.

- George: And what's your advice, Doctor?
- Doctor: Sign the consent quickly, and we'll start the investigations at 5:00 pm. The operation can be done today at 8:00pm.
- George: Who will perform the operation?
- Doctor: The head of the surgery, Dr. Steve Mic; he is a specialized consultant.
- George: You can give us the papers then and we'll sign them? If there's any other advice, please let us know now.
- Doctor: Nothing more, but I want you to remain happy until the operation, from my own non documented experience I can say that being optimistic and positive increases the chances of success of the surgery.
- George: Fine… perhaps you agree with Adam about optimism.
- Doctor: I think that all sane people would agree about that, including you.
- George: Katrina exceeded us all by booking the tickets and arranging a trip after the surgery.
- Doctor: Great! You only need one week after the surgery to recover and for follow up, then you can leave… though we advise you not to travel before ten days.
- Katrina: Thank God I booked the tickets after ten days; I think I planned it excellently.
- Doctor: Yes, what a good job. You know what, George, I congratulate you on your wife and your wonderful friends. The papers will be here soon, I'll begin with the preparations for the operation, and I wish you a speedy recovery.

After the doctor left, George turned to Katrina and said:

- George: It seems that things are progressing towards having the operation. I never had enough time to properly arrange everything yet, and that is why I would like to arrange whatever I can of my personal affairs now.
- Katrina: Fine, but what do you mean?
- George: I wrote down everything I own in detail, so that nothing will be lost in case of my death. I wrote in my will that everything will be left only to you and the kids.
- Katrina: Don't say that George… you'll live and recover.
- Adam: Sorry for interrupting, regardless of my optimism and my certainty that you will recover, but writing your will is important, very important actually, be-

cause if you don’t, some of your money might be lost. Moreover, your wife might be deprived of some of her rights according to the rules of the church.

- George: I don’t understand you, how can you be religious and say this?
- Adam: What about your parents?
- George: I haven’t seen them for about ten years.
- Adam: Maybe this is not the proper time to say this, but that’s a big mistake - without any doubt.
- Katrina: I agree with you, and I’ve discussed this matter with him many times. How I wish that my parents were still alive.
- George: It seems that both of you agree against me today, I promise if I am fine after the surgery I’ll visit them before I travel… It seems that the surgery will be a turning point in my life.
- Adam: Actually, it would be better if you included them in your will.
- Katrina: Yes, God says: “Honor your father and mother.”
- George: Unfortunately I sometimes find the words of the Holy Book contradictory. For instance I read what you said, and I also read “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”
- Katrina: In Catholicism, when we find this contradiction we refer to the Pope to decide what’s right. But the Protestants exert much more effort on this matter.
- George: You’ve taken us back to the abhorrent papacy that prevents reason and is similar to paganism. Anyway we’ll discuss that later. What matters now is that we return to what we were saying about my parents, so I’ll include them in the will, according to your advice, and make you a witness.
- Adam: This is important, though I’m sure that you’ll be safe and sound.
- George: I also renewed my life insurance policy about a month ago; so this’ll be a guarantee for you after my death.
- Katrina: God is the only true Guarantor, this is just a measure that people take.
- George: And what about the house?
- Adam: It is very important to write everything you want to include in the will, but what is more important is that we’ll pray that God grants you health and a speedy recovery, I’m sure He will cure you. Then he smiled and said: Don’t forget to buy me a present from Rome.

Katrina began crying, so she wiped her tears that wouldn’t stop. Then she

smiled because of Adam's request, and said:

- Katrina: Yes, the most important thing now is to pray to God. By the way, what do you want from Rome, Adam?
- George: Ha ha ha! There's nothing to get from Rome except Indian, and not Italian, aloes wood fragrance. I definitely won't buy you any Catholic gifts from the Vatican.
- Adam: No thanks, I don't want either of these. I want two things: the first is a very fancy leather bag, but it must be very cheap, and if it isn't, then I don't want it. The second is a big poster of Cannavaro, he is a legendary Italian football player.
- George: A very fancy and very cheap leather bag…I don't think that's possible… unless we find Motea Arrahman in Italy.
- Adam: The one who made Motea Arrahman available in India, will make you find another one in Italy.
- George: This is the first time I've noticed that you're into sports.
- Adam: Cannavaro was nominated as the best player in the last world cup championship. Most athletes in Italy believe that he'll be the successor of the legendary Franco Parisis. Generally I like playing sport rather than watching it, but this is what I want you to get for me from Rome.
- Katrina: If you want a cross from Rome I'll buy one for you, if George doesn't find want you wanted.
- George: You often agree together against me.
- Adam: Thank you. I was joking with my friend. Would you please excuse me?

During this, Tom entered and saw them smiling and laughing…

- Tom: It seems that you have some good news, George; I want to make sure you are fine.
- George: No news, but my friend Adam wants me to bring him a souvenir from Rome; a very fancy and cheap leather bag, so we were making fun of that.
- Tom: Rome? Will you go to Rome to have the surgery done there?
- George: Let me first introduce my friend, Adam. Adam this is my psychiatrist and friend, Tom. The surgery will be done today and I'll travel in ten days to Rome with my beloved Katrina and the kids for a holiday, and I don't know how to bring him a fancy cheap bag?
- Tom: You have a great optimistic spirit; did anything change regarding the operation?

- George: No, but my view to life has changed after what Katrina did, and after what I learnt from Adam.
- Tom: We really need to learn to be optimistic, most psychological problems can be solved by optimism, but sometimes it's difficult to learn that.
- George: Take some time with Adam and he'll teach you that, he's very optimistic.
- Tom: Then, I'll be delighted to be his student.
- George: Actually I get most of the words I use for philosophizing from Adam or Katrina… Do you remember when I told you that we should take things easy and without complications? I quoted this from Adam.
- Tom: Great! This very quote has changed my nature and way of thinking, as I have a tendency to be complex and my readings are in the same direction.
- Adam: George is complimenting me, I have learnt a lot from him. I'm only a waiter in a coffee shop, and he is my tutor.

Katrina smiled and said:

- Katrina: As long as we have started with the compliments; Tom really helped George to find the answers to his controversial questions.

Tom said with astonishment:

- Tom: Sorry, but I just wanted to make sure that you're going to have the operation done today?
- George: It seems that you don't believe me. Yes I'll have the operation today. I think you still need a lesson in optimism. I've arranged all of my affairs; I only need to have half an hour alone to write down some notes. Life and death are in God's hands.
- Tom: And when is the operation?
- George: The preparations are scheduled to begin at 5pm, and the surgery at 8pm.

Adam looked at his watch and said…

- Adam: Excuse me for now; I have to go to the coffee shop.
- George: Thanks a lot for your support Adam; you're a good friend!
- Tom: Wait Adam, this is my card, I hope I can spend some time with you to get to know you better.
- George: It's very important for you to meet each other. Adam, it seems that Tom has changed to be different from how I used to describe him before.
- Adam: I'm honored to meet you. I apologize, but I don't have a card.

Adam took out a piece of paper and wrote down his name and telephone

number, and gave the paper to Tom. Then he said good bye to everyone and left.

- George: Though I've only known Adam for a short time, he is one of my best friends.
- George: He's a really good man. When I was in a coma Kach made fun of him because he is a waiter, but Adam didn't reply to him, he only said that the value of a man lies in his character, and that he gets his value from inside himself, not from his work-place.
- Tom: Then it's important for me to meet him again and get to know him better. And I'm glad that you believe I've changed, George.

George's phone rang so he excused himself and answered it - It was Kach; his manager…

- Kach: Good, you seem fine now. I visited you when you were in a coma, and there was a strange waiter there. How are you now?
- George: I'm fine and the waiter is my friend. I won't allow anyone to say anything bad about him.
- Kach: Ha ha ha! I have good news for you, the board of directors decided to give you a bonus because you managed to sort out the signing of two big contracts for the company in one month.
- George: Many thanks to you and to them. Perhaps I got a bonus as a means of bribery.
- Kach: Stop saying that! When will you come back to work? You didn't ask for any days off.
- George: I don't know, I'll have surgery today, and then I'll travel to Rome for a short holiday. When I come back I'll ask for some days off, and decide whether to work with you again or not.
- Kach: You seem to be irritated or tired, you never talk like this.
- George: I'm sorry, I've changed my ethics, and I was a tool that was used to bribe Benjamin.
- Kach: You're irritated because of the surgery; I'll call you later, good bye.
- George: Good bye.
- Katrina: What's wrong, darling?
- George: This Kach is the opposite picture of Adam; no morals, no ethics, and no principles.
- Katrina: Many people are like him in our societies due to too much materialism,

atheism, and being away from religion.

- Tom: I believe that being away from God is the main problem facing mankind; it is one of the main reasons behind worries, feeling alienated, and disasters.
- George: I understand that Katrina might say that, but it is weird to hear that from you, Tom!!
- Tom: Ha ha ha! Didn't you say that you were convinced that I had changed? Another consideration is that all scientific studies have proven the fact I just mentioned, but in reality the main problem lies with the priests.
- George: You mean the Catholic Papacy?
- Tom: I know what you are implying, but I only came to make sure that you are fine. We can discuss this another time. Excuse me for now; I'll visit you again tomorrow.
- George: Thank you, Tom. I'm glad that you came.

Katrina turned to George after Tom had left and said:

- Katrina: Tom has really changed dramatically!!
- George: Yes, religion changes everything in man.
- Katrina: And it seems that you also have changed, George.
- George: Perhaps!
- Katrina: I have to go home to tend to the kids for a bit, but after that I'll do nothing but pray for you. I'll come back at 5 o'clock.
- George: Okay dear, but it's very important I see you at 5, to finish all the papers and give them to you.

(3)

George was absorbed in writing his will, and listing all his possessions. He finished within an hour; then he decided to send e-mails to all his friends to ask them to pray for him and tell them about the surgery. He wanted the prayers to be from those of all religions and sects, in the hope that the correct one will be answered. He sent e-mails to his friends, especially to Habib the Catholic, and Levvi the Jew. He noticed that he didn't have any Muslim friends, then he remembered Mote Arrahman and he sent him a message. India reminded him of Jostya; his Buddhist friend, but he told himself: "Buddhists are idolatrous, they create their own gods, I don't think it'll be useful to ask her to pray. How I hate paganism!" Then he turned off his computer.

His phone rang, it was a strange number, but he answered…

- George: Hello!
- Speaker: Hello George, how are you?
- George: Hello! Who is it?
- Speaker: It seems that you've forgotten me; I'm Levvi from Tel Aviv.
- George: Hello Levi, how could I ever forget you? You were so good to me and I learned so much from you? I miss you Levvi. Sorry that I didn't recognize your voice; I didn't expect your call.
- Levvi: Tell me about the surgery, I'm very worried about you.
- George: Thanks for caring, it means a lot. I'm scheduled for surgery today, I'm very optimistic that I'll be fine; I just sent e-mails to all my friends for them to pray for me.
- Levvi: I'll pray for you, but unfortunately I'll pray a Jewish prayer.
- George: Why do you say unfortunately?
- Levvi: I have been reading about religions, ideas and sects since your last visit, in order to reach the path to happiness, and I was waiting, and am still waiting, for you to show me the way.
- George: I think you're exaggerating a bit … I was the one who learned from you, and in particular you; to be honest with myself… by the way, how is our friend Habib?
- Levi: He's here beside me; he wants to talk to you.
- George: Ha ha ha! Is he guarding you even on the phone?! Habib is a great man, Levvi, try to keep your friendship strong, friends are very important.
- Levi: Ha ha ha! I have some news that Habib might want to tell you… what matters is that we'll both pray for you. I wish you a speedy recovery. I hope you will call us after the operation to let us know how it went. Here, Habib wants to talk to you.
- Habib: Hello George, the bodyguard is talking, how are you?
- George: I'll have surgery today, but I'll be fine. How are you, Habib? I miss you.
- Habib: We're fine thanks, we miss you too. Your visit triggered many discussions…
- George: You're being humble, Doctor, I learnt from you. And your words about Christian sects are still echoing in my head. By the way, I'll visit Rome and the Vatican next week, to make sure of what you said.
- Habib: Great, keep your quest for happiness, you promised to keep us in informed.
- George: Of course I'll tell you about the path to happiness, that's what I promised

Levvi.

- Habib: I have something special to tell you that'll make you happy: Levi and I are getting married.
- George: Wow, congratulations, my friend. Is it going to be a Catholic or a Jewish marriage?
- Habib: Ha ha ha! We'll get married in a few months, but there seems to be some obstacles. But we'll do whatever is necessary to get to our path that leads to happiness, whether Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant.
- George: We pray to you, O God, to help us find the way to You.
- Habib: God bless you my friend. We're waiting for good news about your health and your path to happiness. Good bye.

George was immersed in his thoughts when he heard the nurse saying:

- We'll have to go to do the investigations now.

George looked at his watch and saw that it was 5pm sharp. The nurse wheeled him down to the investigation room where he was subjected to some inspections and tests, and then he returned back to his room. When he looked at his watch again it was 6:30pm, but Katrina hadn't arrived yet. He called her and she told him that she had just put her foot in the door of the hospital. A few minutes later Katrina entered the room in a rush and apologized that she was late because there was a problem with her car and she had to take the bus instead.

- George: I was worried about you and was wondering why you were late.
- Katrina: Sorry honey, but I was afraid that the car would breakdown completely, and that's why I took the bus.
- George: Here, take this envelope please, you'll find all the papers and documents you'll need if something bad happens to me, God forbid.
- Katrina: You'll be just fine, God willing.
- George: And there's something that I didn't write down.
- Katrina: And what's that?
- George: I want you to keep searching for happiness, for you and the kids.
- Katrina: You will do this yourself, and you will achieve what you are searching for. God will never leave you. You're a man with morals and principles.
- George: Wipe your tears now, dear, and swear to me that you'll keep your promise to me.
- Katrina: I promise to walk on the path to happiness with you, God willing, and we'll start our path in Rome together.
- George: I love you, Katrina.

He went to her to give her a big hug, and she started to weep.

- Katrina: I love you too, George, very much!
- George: Be optimistic, as you usually are. Did you book the room in the hotel in Rome?
- Katrina: Yes, I did.

The nurse came back to take George to complete the rest of his tests and begin the surgery. George took Katrina's hands and he asked her to go home and pray for him…

- George: Go home, sweetie, I'll be under anesthesia in a while and the surgery will take three hours. There's no need for you to stay, I'll be fine.
- Katrina: Oh George, don't say that. I love you, we'll go to Rome together and we'll find happiness.
- The nurse: You can go, madam, we'll call you when the operation is done; we have your phone number.
- Katrina: May God protect you George and bless your life.

George went to the operating theatre. His heart ached with fear for Katrina and the kids, but he wasn't afraid about himself. He kept thinking about how selfish the world would be if everyone only thought of themselves. He said to himself: "It is going to be unbearable, but thinking about others and their sorrow and pain makes it easier to bear one's own pain… This is how life is; if someone spends his entire life making others happy, he'll eventually be happy, and the one who lives only for himself will definitely lose the way." The doctor interrupted his thoughts and said:

- Doctor: I want you to be assured as your primary investigations showed good results, everything will be just fine.

(4)

The operation took four hours and it finally finished at midnight. Katrina kept anxiously calling the hospital every hour; she was waiting restlessly until the doctor finally called and told her that the operation had finished and everything was alright. He told her that the results of the operation would be apparent within the next twelve hours, and that George wouldn't wake up before then…

- Doctor: Be rest assured, madam, and tell the others who keep calling that everything is fine, as we have kept receiving phone calls since the operation started.

- Katrina: Okay, but who called?
- Doctor: Mr. Adam and Dr. Tom. If you know them, please call them.
- Katrina: Okay, I'll call them and tell them to pray for George.

At about 12 pm the next day… George started to wake up. He started to move his hands in an unusual manner, and he said some words… Katrina, Adam and Tom were all sitting beside him waiting for him to wake up, but they only understood a few words of what he said: "The path to happiness, why were we created?… life…death…"

The doctor came to examine George; Katrina stood up quickly and the doctor smiled at her…

- Doctor: I can understand that you're so worried, madam… but I want to assure you that all the tests showed good results and we expect him to wake up after a short while.
- Katrina: But he says words that are not understandable.
- Doctor: Don't worry, he's still under anesthesia and this is normal. If he can talk clearly after the effects of the anesthesia wear off, that'll be the first sign that the operation was successful. Tomorrow we'll start to take him off the medical equipment, and if he can move, and then stand up, this will be proof that the operation was 100% successful. When he wakes up, we'll give him painkillers every three hours, and he'll recover and be fine, be assured.
- Katrina: Thank you, God will protect him
- Doctor: By the way, before the operation he kept on saying: "The path to happiness," What did he mean by the path to happiness?
- Katrina: It's a path that he is searching for, and he was completely devoted to finding that path.
- Doctor: He's one of the happiest patients in the hospital, why is he searching for happiness?
- Katrina: He wasn't happy until he started his quest to find that path.
- Doctor: He'll find it after he recovers. Excuse me for now.

When the doctor left, Tom turned to George, who was still sedated and attacked to the medical equipment, and he said in sorrow:

- Tom: You'll definitely find the path to happiness, George, and I'll find it with you. I've tried the path of misery, the path of atheism, and I only gained sorrow and grief. But I'm not convinced about any religion yet, though I'm sure that the Merciful and All-powerful God Who created us is going to lead us to the right way.
- Adam: I'm sure that you'll find it, Tom.

- Tom: How can I ever find it, Adam?
- Adam: I'll repeat what you said; that the Merciful and All-powerful God won't make the ones who want to know and find Him drift away. That's why I'm sure that you, George and I will eventually find what we're looking for.
- Tom: Are you searching for the path to happiness too?
- Adam: Perhaps…

George started to open his eyes. Katrina noticed, so she approached the bed and said:

- Katrina: George, honey, can you hear me?
- George: Yes.
- Katrina: Thank God that you're fine, we were worried about you. Adam and Tom are here to make sure that you're fine.
- George: Thank you.
- Adam: I hope you have a speedy recovery, George.
- Tom: I also hope that you have a speedy recovery my friend. The doctor told us that the operation was successful.
- Katrina: Do you need anything, darling?
- George: No.
- Adam: I think that we should go and leave him to wake up quietly and slowly.
- Tom: Fine… I also think that Adam and I should go and leave you here beside him.
- Katrina: Thank you so much. He'll call you today himself to make you feel at rest.
- Tom: Do you have a car, Adam, or would you like a lift?
- Adam: I don't have a car, but I don't want to bother you; I'll take the bus or some public transportation.
- Tom: No, don't be silly. Catch a lift with me; I want to talk to you anyway. Good bye Katrina.
- Katrina: Good bye gentlemen.

Within half an hour after Tom and Adam had left, George opened his eyes again to find Katrina sitting beside him, although her thoughts weren't…

- George: Katrina…
- Katrina: George, my darling, how are you now?
- George: I'm okay, just a little groggy from the anesthesia; I imagined that I saw Tom and Adam though!
- Katrina: No, they were here; they left a little while ago after the doctor assured them that you'd be fine. They have been here since early this morning… How're

you feeling, honey?

- George: What's the time now? I feel some pain in my skull.
- Katrina: It's around 1 pm; don't make yourself tired, I'll call the doctor.

The doctor came immediately after the nurse had called him, and said:

- Doctor: You look fine, George.
- George: But I have severe pain in my skull.
- Doctor: Don't worry; we'll give you some more painkillers. This is normal of course because we opened your skull, but everything seems to be normal and looking good.
- Katrina: He started to talk clearly but slowly.
- Doctor: These are good signs that the operation has been successful. Be rest assured, George.
- George: Thank you.

The doctor gave George an analgesic shot and then he turned to Katrina and advised her to go home, saying that George was going to sleep for two hours at least…

- Katrina: No, Doctor, I'd rather wait here beside him.
- Doctor: It's up to you, but after he wakes up we'll give him another shot that'll make him sleep for another two hours, or even more.
- George: Go home, sweetie.
- Katrina: Okay, George, if you insist. But I'll pray for you all day long.

George woke up at 7:30 am. He talked to the nurse normally and clearly, but he was still being feed from a drip, as he couldn't have normal food yet.

He called Katrina and told her that he was fine, and she asked him to call Adam and Tom, so he called them. Then he called Levi and Habib…Then once again he surrendered to his thoughts about the path to happiness and his voyage to Rome.

Towards the land of churches

11

Towards the land of churches

Towards the land of churches

(1)

George’s health started improving gradually, and signs of success of the operation started to be clear. The very next day he was able to get up from his bed, after they had removed the equipment, though he still had the drip and he was not allowed to eat yet. Katrina came to visit and brought the kids with her to offer support to their dad; they were glad and relieved when they saw that he was healthy. He chatted with them happily and felt comforted by them. Though he was feeling in high spirits, George did not forget to send a message to his friends who he had asked to pray for him the day before. . Perhaps the success of the operation was due to the prayers of one of them being answered…perhaps!

George began to read again and prepare for his trip to Rome by making sure he had enough information about Christianity, its denominations and its deficiencies. He wondered about being born a Protestant. It seemed that he didn›t know much about his religion, and most of what he had learned was from Katrina the Catholic, or Habib the Catholic during his stay in Jerusalem, or from his recent study during his search for the path to happiness. He hadn’t really studied his religion before, like most of the Christians who believe in a religion they do not know much about. In fact many of them were like him, not knowing anything about their religion except its name.

The reading about Christianity was very interesting, especially what he read about the radical contradictions between the different Christian denominations: the differences in the belief, behavior, worship, and also the military conflicts and war as well. He deeply pondered over why they had these differences. Was Katrina right when she told him that the problem was with the Protestants, and not the Catholics? But then he remembered that the Orthodox were actually present before Catholics in Christian history, and the principle of proximity states that the sect that was present closest to the time of Jesus (peace be upon him) should be the right one. However the Bible was neither written down nor memorized by heart in the lifetime of Jesus. He asked himself: «Then

which group is the right one?» He wanted to talk with someone; so he decided to call Adam…

- George: Hello, Adam.
- Adam: Hello, thank God you're alright.
- George: Yes, thanks, and I hope to see you soon, Adam.
- Adam: I can come and visit you tomorrow, if it's okay?
- George: Good, but I have a question: do you think I should resume my sessions with Tom or not?
- Adam: Yes, I think you should, but why are you asking this question? And why now?
- George: I don't know. Maybe because sometimes I feel that we do nothing new in the sessions!
- Adam: What do you mean by "nothing new"?
- George: I don't know, just a weird feeling.
- Adam: I don't know, but I think you should continue what you started, as long as no new reason appears for you not to do so, especially since those sessions seem to be very useful for you; and Tom has changed and has become a better person, as you say.
- George: You're right, I don't know why I feel at ease with him now and I treat him as a friend, not as a psychiatrist? I'll call him tomorrow to arrange an appointment, but I'd like to talk to you before the session, if you can. Maybe we can discuss some points.
- George ended the call so that he could make an appointment with Tom as soon as possible. He asked him to have a session before his trip to Rome, and he asked him if they could have the session in the hospital. Tom agreed; he didn't want to tire George.
- George: Can it be the day after tomorrow, in the morning? The doctor told me that I could leave in three days, in the evening.
- Tom: As you like, George.

Katrina **arrived** as George was engrossed in reading ... **He noticed her** when she entered the room. **She greeted him cheerfully, and** then sat down beside him and kissed him on his cheek …

- Katrina: I'm so happy, honey. You're getting better and the doctor told me that you'll be fine.

- George: Yes, I'm fine. What about our trip to Rome?
- Katrina: Almost everything is ready; the airline tickets, hotel reservations, and the scheduling of interviews with some individuals and tours with the tourist groups.
- George: Good, but what do you mean by "interviews with some individuals?"
- Katrina: I know what you want so I have arranged interviews for you with some of the priests, and also a visit to the Vatican.
- George: But this isn't what I want; this is what you want.
- Katrina: Yes you're right. But I did that because I know that this is what you really need.
- George: Perhaps you're right. Thank you, my dear.
- Katrina: Will you sit with Doctor Tom before or after our journey?
- George: Before the trip, the appointment will be the day after tomorrow, here in the hospital … It seems that you care very much about that session?
- Katrina: Yes, you're right. I don't know why, but I feel that you've become happier since your sessions started with Tom.
- George: Just for this reason?!
- Katrina: Yes, just for this reason … or maybe because I feel that Tom is better than before. I don't know why.
- George: And I have the same impression. But I'm afraid that he might be deceiving me.
- Katrina: Everything is possible. But I tend to believe that the change is real, though everything is possible.
- George: But if he is deceiving us, then what would be the purpose of that?
- Katrina: I don't think that he is interested in deceiving us, so I feel that he is truthful in his claim that he has changed.
- George: I have the same opinion, but Brad, his manager, is the problem.
- Katrina: I hate that guy; I don't know why I always find him so uncomfortable.
- George: Even Tom complains about him!
- Katrina: Perhaps, but this doesn't make sense! He can fire him and be relieved of him, instead of complaining about him!
- George: True, but there may be another reason. I don't know! Anyhow, I was thinking that I should stop the sessions with Tom.
- Katrina: I think it's better to continue …It's up to you.

-

- George: Your opinion is the same as Adam`s, he said to me: “You have started a path and are supposed to complete it,” and pointed out how Tom had improved. He also said: “You followed him when he was bad, will you leave him now when he has changed and improved?”
- Katrina: Logical words and a strong argument.
- George: How you always agree with each other makes me sure that he is a Catholic, not a Protestant.
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! Or maybe it’s proof that Catholicism is closer to the right path than Protestantism.
- George: Perhaps, I’ve written down many questions and comparisons. We should discuss them in Rome.
- Katrina: Great idea. We’ll be in the Center of Catholicism, actually we’ll be in the center of Christianity in all the world.
- George: Perhaps we’ll be in the center of Catholicism, but we will certainly not be in the center of Christianity; we don’t believe in the miserable papacy.
- Katrina: Don’t say such words of disrespect again; we’ll discuss these issues in Rome, as we agreed. Don’t you feel that you’re prejudiced against Catholicism? Do you want me to remind you of our criticisms about misguided Protestants?
- George: Misguided!! A beautiful description of Protestants! Didn’t you notice that I didn’t become angry, despite of what you said?!
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! Maybe, because you know that it is a realistic description of Protestantism. Don’t you compose your religion as you want, don’t you understand the Bible as you want? And this is what I meant by misguided Protestants!
- George: Maybe it is as you said, or maybe we are free from the tyranny of the Roman church and its granting of indulgences..
- Katrina: We have agreed to discuss all of this in Rome; shouldn’t we stop the debate?
- George: Ha ha ha! Okay, I’d like to make sure from the doctor if there is anything which we need for the trip. I’m very excited about the trip!
- Katrina: You mean excited to meet with the bishop!!

George sat up, smiled and said:

George: **Yes; to convince him in front of you to admit his mistake concerning the religion.**

Katrina: Although I know you are being sarcastic, I will really try to be unbiased on the trip. Could you help me darling?

- George: You know how to make my heart flutter darling; your victorious argument has touched my heart. I'll do my best.
- Katrina: I love you, George. I'm going to the doctor now to inquire about the condition of your health and the tour.

When Katrina returned an hour later she found George engrossed in reading ...

- Katrina: Oh ... What you're reading now is important to this extent?!
- George: Yes, I am reading about Martin Luther and John Calvin, the two most important personalities who left an impact on Protestantism.
- Katrina: You mean that they composed and made Protestantism.
- George: You spoke the truth, to a large extent; however, they did so to get rid of the Catholic diseases and its obsolete customs....
- Katrina: So you believe that Protestantism had been arranged or organized?!
- George: Unfortunately yes, it aimed at decreasing the atheism that Catholicism had spread due to its secrets and papacy. Some people even used to believe that there's a relationship between religion and backwardness! Are you sure you'd like to get into it now?
- Katrina: Oh … the speech has diverted back to Catholicism again. No, honey, let's continue in Rome when you will be convinced that Protestantism has been composed and is a distortion of the Christian faith.
- George: True, Protestantism is a distortion of Catholicism, and that is why they deny each other and fight each other … even some Protestant denominations deny each other. Do you know how many Protestant churches and denominations there are?
- Katrina: No, has it reached two hundred yet?
- George: You're going to be amazed by this news; it's between twenty eight thousand to forty thousand churches and denominations.
- Katrina: Forty thousand churches and denominations?!

Loathe appeared on George`s face, his eyebrows scrunched, and he changed his sitting position, and then said:

- George: Regrettably, yes, and this reminds me of the sects of non-heavenly religions, such as those which I saw in India. And unfortunately sometimes I feel that it’s hard to be honest with myself.

- Katrina: Didn’t I tell you that Protestantism has been made-up!? Then she smiled and said: We’ll discuss it in Rome, as agreed.
- George: Why is it that every time you’ve had your say, you say that the debate will be in Rome? Then he smiled and said: No problem, dear, I will agree just for you.., what did the doctor say?
- Katrina: I love you, George. He said that your health is good, and the operation was 100% successful. And that you are ready to leave. You’ll need to rest for two or three days after coming out and that would be enough. Then you can continue in your normal everyday activities and travel without any risks.
- George: Are there any precautions for the trip?
- Katrina: He said that there weren’t any, except the general advice; such as not to strain yourself or expose yourself to danger, but this has nothing to do with the operation.
- George: Good.
- Katrina: The trip will be great, and we’ll renew the memories of our early days of marriage.
- George: How sweet were the early days of our marriage! We’ll renew our memories and be happy on our journey, but there will be something new. ...
- Katrina: And what’s that?
- George: Michael and Sally.
- Katrina: Although we’ll have to change some of our plans because of them, no doubt they’ll bring us joy and it will increase our bond as a family. I love them so much..
- George: I know that I’m not the best of fathers, and it seems that they’ve grown up suddenly.
- Katrina: We’ll do our best to make them happy in their coming life, right?
- George: Yes, I think that the best gift I can give them is to show them the path to happiness.
- Katrina: The path to happiness again!
- George: And also a third and fourth time. I don’t know why I feel I’m very close to reaching it.
- Katrina: Maybe we’ll find it together in Rome.
- George: Ha ha ha! You mean we’ll all become Catholic again?!

- Katrina: Perhaps ... or maybe something else. Who knows!? Perhaps other than that.
- George: And leave Catholicism?!
- Katrina: Or maybe you'll leave Protestantism!
- George: Speaking hypothetically: are you able to leave Catholicism?
- Katrina: Decision making takes a long time and is a struggle for me... but now I can say yes, even though it is a difficult decision.
- George: I'm proud of you, my dear.
- Katrina: I'm more proud of you, George. You weren't satisfied living without defining your goals, giving a meaning to your life and answering your questions.
- George: Ha ha ha! Then congratulations to you, O Protestant!
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! No, congratulations to you for being convinced and returning to the original source; to Catholicism, dear critical Protestant!

(2)

George absorbed himself in reading again when Katrina left, to complete what he was reading about Martin Luther and John Calvin, and others, as well about recent changes in the Christian religion. He did not notice the time until he heard the nurse saying to him:

- Nurse: Do you have an exam after you leave here?
- George: Yes, the exam of my fate.
- Nurse: What academic level is it?
- George: That I don't know.
- Nurse: It seems like you don't want to talk to me, and I apologize for interrupting you, but I came to take off the drip. You'll be back on solids in the morning.
- George: I apologize; I didn't mean that I don't want to talk. But I really do feel like I'm in a test, but not an academic one.
- Nurse: I don' understand anything you're saying!
- George: What religion are you?
- Nurse: I'm not really interested in religion, except Protestantism ... Calvinism.
- George: So you mean you are among the followers of John Calvin?
- Nurse: Yes, although I don't know what the new ideas he brought to the religion were. All that I do know is that it's closer to logic and the views that the wise people who belong to the Lutheran Church agree upon.

- George: How could you know this if you don’t know the new ideas that he added to the religion?
- Nurse: I’m a nurse, not a nun. It seems that he resolved the bloody conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.
- George: Is it conceivable that the believers of one religion fight each other?! Is it conceivable that someone like Calvin comes and re-makes the religion?!
- Nurse: That’s why I told you that I don’t believe in either Protestantism or Catholicism. In fact I don’t believe in any religion. But I need some religion, that’s why I believe in Protestantism?
- George: Excuse me, but what do you mean by saying you need some religion?
- Nurse: I can’t live without religion; life without religion is torment and misery. I was an atheist, and then moved to secularism, and I was so near to committing suicide because life was so difficult. I knew that there was something wrong with me, so I decided to be a Protestant, although I don’t know anything about it. You would never understand why ... nice talking to you, but I have work to do.
- George: Are you really satisfied with being a Protestant although you do not know anything about it, as you say? I think you are running away from yourself, but to where?

The impact of George’s words appeared on the face of the nurse. She was hiding misery in her heart and emptiness in her soul:

- Nurse: Perhaps, but towards where I do not know. I’m like a feather in the wind, but perhaps one day I’ll reach what I want. Sorry, I have to go!

George woke up early in morning, after breakfast had been brought to him. He devoured it like an animal; he was very hungry and had a strong desire to eat. Afterward he began reading again, and the nurse that had come to him the day before returned to measure his temperature ...

- Nurse: Good! You’re well now.
- George: I’m sorry for yesterday.
- Nurse: No problem, thank you for your kindness and I think your words were true; that I’m aimlessly running away from myself. But what should I do if atheism and secularism is torment, and religion is only a way to escape?
- George: But religion is not a way to escape things, but you, yourself, are escaping from your religion.
- Nurse: Because this religion as you say has been composed, but not by our God.

Perhaps one day someone will reform this religion so it will be better.

- George: But your religion is a divine religion; it's from God.
- Nurse: You know religion better than me. But how can it be divine if it has been changed by Calvin or Luther, or anybody else, according to what they want?! Indeed, Jesus himself was killed before the writing of the New Testament. It was written by some students of his students.
- George: It seems as though you are a philosopher of religions!
- Nurse: No, I'm just one who is running away from herself, as you said.
- George: What is the solution then, in your point of view?
- Nurse: The solution is what I believe; to escape from myself.
- George: I don't think escaping from the problem is the correct solution.
- Nurse: Then what is the solution, in your point of view?
- George: To study all the details of various religions and learn the truth.
- Nurse: To be priests and monks?! Even they have serious doubts, and that's why they always change the religion.
- George: To know the path doesn't mean that we will become priests or monks. I respect monks and priests, but I don't want to be one. The point is that uncertainty brings misery, and certainty brings peace of mind.
- Nurse: You seem to be Catholic, as they want us to believe in whatever the priests and monks say, without discussing anything, even without us referring to the Bible by ourselves, without depending on their interpretations.
- George: I don't want anyone to be between me and my Lord. And no, I'm a Protestant.
- Nurse: Then, on what grounds are you criticizing me when you're like me?! Unless you are a Lutheran?
- George: Ha ha ha! In fact I don't know if I'm a follower of Calvin, Luther or something else; in fact I don't even know if I'm Protestant; though my father and mother were.
- Nurse: So then you're exactly like me! How can you blame me for escaping from myself?!
- George: Because I'm also escaping from myself.
- Nurse: But to where?
- George: To the path to happiness.
- Nurse: Ha ha ha! And where is it, O philosopher!?

- George: I don’t know, but I’ll find it, wherever it may be.
- Nurse: You seem to have philosophical ideologies, and although I enjoy your speech, I’m in a hurry and I have to go. And by the way, I’m sure you’ll find it because you are determined to find it. And if you find it, please let me know.
- George: What is that?!
- Nurse: The path to happiness!

Shortly after the nurse left, the doctor came into the room. He assured him of his good health, and told him that he could leave the following evening.

- George: Thank you.
- Doctor: Your wife told me that you’re going to travel to Rome. Congratulations, it`s a nice country.
- George: Yes, we’re going with the children. Is there any advice concerning my health, after the operation?
- Doctor: No, all is well.

George once again occupied himself completely in his books. He was unaware of his surroundings, so he was startled by the voice of Adam when he greeted him:

- Adam: You seem to be reading something very important, so much that you’re totally unware of what’s happening around you!
- George: Adam! Hello, when did you arrive? I was reading the ancient history of Christianity.
- Adam: Well, what did you find?
- George: When you read the old and new history of Christianity, you find very strange and confusing things!
- Adam: Don’t you think that you’re a bit quick in criticizing Catholicism, even before you travel to Rome?
- George: I’m not criticizing Catholicism.
- Adam: I don’t understand. What do you mean?
- George: I’m criticizing Catholicism, Protestantism, and all Christian denominations.
- Adam: You’re going to Rome, and things will be clearer to you after you travel. Don’t be quick to attack Christianity; it seems that what you are thinking may not be the reality.
- George: That’s what I want to consult you about.

- Adam: I don’t get it; what is that you want to consult me about it?
- George: I also contacted Tom and made an appointment for tomorrow, and I know what he’s going to say to me.
- Adam: Good, continue. What’s he going to say to you?
- George: He’ll tell me to study Christianity and learn it well during my trip to Rome, but I feel as though I already know Christianity well. Perhaps, through the books I have read or my trip to Jerusalem, or maybe through the course of my life. I’m a Protestant, and I don’t feel I’ll find anything new about Christianity on my trip.
- Adam: How old are you, George?
- George: Thirty eight or thirty nine. Why do you ask?
- Adam: You’ve already tolerated thirty-eight years, why don’t you wait until you travel to Rome, and then return and make certain you are sure of your decision. Don’t you think you’re in a hurry?
- George: Perhaps, but as my knowledge increases about the different denominations of Protestantism, I more inclined to abstain from it.
- Adam: Then, perhaps you’ll convert to Catholicism or the Orthodox religion?
- George: Didn’t I say that you’re a Catholic? But believe me my mind refuses Catholicism papacy, even more than it refuses Protestantism.
- Adam: Your mind may change after the trip. And it’s nice to deal with ideas openly, without having any previous convictions.
- George: I don’t have any previous convictions; I’ve read the literature of the Catholics and Protestants, their history and what they have done, but I’m not convinced about anything.
- Adam: Good, try to open up more and meditate more, but don’t be in a hurry; after the tour you’ll be surer and also satisfied with your decision.
- George: But could religion contradict reason or science?
- Adam: Absolutely not … if the religion is really from God.
- George: If the religion is against reason or fact or science; is this not evidence that it’s not the true religion?
- Adam: Yes, but you must remember that you cannot understand everything in the world, and if you cannot understand something that doesn’t mean that it necessarily contradicts reason or science. It could be only due to our human limitations.
- George: How, please explain more?

- Adam: We cannot understand, with our minds, how we have been created, but it does not mean that God does not exist or is not true; it means our failure to understand is just due to our human limitations.
- George: Despite my efforts, I can't understand that God is one but is still composed of three persons. Is it a secret of the Catholic church that you want me to believe without questioning it at all?
- Adam: There is a big difference between what you cannot understand and what is contrary to reason. Which one do you mean here?
- George: I mean the second one, this is inconsistent with reason, and I can't interpret it.
- Adam: Something which is inconsistent with the sound, unadulterated mind, can't be true and can't be the true religion.
- George: And for this reason, we're going to ignore Orthodox, Catholicism and Protestantism.
- Adam: Why don't you wait until you return from Rome?
- George: If I come back having this view, it means I'll be an atheist or secularist.
- Adam: Aren't atheism and secularism against your mind?
- George: They are in great conflict with my mind, and that's why I fled to religion, and then ran away from non-divine religions to divine religions. But then I hated Judaism as it is now, and I started to hate Christianity, so it seems that all that is left is to be a terrorist Muslim.
- Adam: Do not make the decision until your return from Rome, you may understand and be convinced about Christianity.
- George: But what if I'm not convinced?
- Adam: Study Islam. Perhaps, it'll be the path to happiness!
- George: Why don't you study Islam, then? And become a reactionary womanizing terrorist.
- Adam: Right now we're studying Christianity, and I'll tell you about me when you return from Rome.
- George: I don't know why you and Katrina keep speaking as though Rome will convince me to go against my mind and believe in what's contrary to logic!
- Adam : I didn't say you're going against logic, I said that you shouldn't rush, and you are wise. If you aren't convinced, then do what you want. I only came as you asked me to, and I haven't imposed anything on you. So why are you attacking

me?

- George: Sorry! Adam, I’m hothead by nature, but believe me, I just want to find happiness quickly. The thing that scared me the most before the operation was to die before ever reaching that happiness.
- Adam: You will reach it by the grace of God almighty, and getting there later is better than not getting there at all. Actually, you haven’t delayed your search at all, rather you are going very fast.
- George: I repeat my apologies to you Adam. Maybe I am in a hurry, or maybe I am bored of these topics.
- Adam: If you’re in a hurry in order to achieve this goal, there is no problem in that. But boredom means you will stop your search and not complete it, which would be a real disaster.
- George: Disaster! Don’t you think you’re exaggerating?!
- Adam: Without being persistent, man would not reach anything, nor achieve any success. To be apathetic means not to be persistent, but then this isn’t consistent with the character of one who is in a hurry like you.
- George: I agree with you, but you’re motivated quickly too. Haven’t you noticed that?
- Adam: Perhaps, but haven’t you noticed that you tend to provoke me?
- George: Ha ha ha! Sometimes … but you’re just irritable.

At that moment Katrina entered, along with Michael and Sally. They ran to their father’s bed. He embraced them eagerly … and became preoccupied in talking with them instead of Adam … Adam waited for a few minutes, then decided to leave ...

- Adam: I`m happy that you’re fine. Can I leave now?

Katrina smiled at Adam, and said:

- Katrina: I’m sorry. Michael and Sally haven’t seen their father since the operation, and haven’t sat with him for a long time because he was traveling before then.
- Adam: What are you apologizing for?! We’ve completed our talk and I’m now satisfied that my friend is fine. I have work so I wish to leave.
- George: I’m grateful to you Adam; will I see you before my trip?
- Adam: If I don’t, we should at least call each other. Good-bye for now!

After Adam left, Katrina said:

- Katrina: The only time I see your friend is in the hospital. Anyhow, he is a wonderful person, very polite, and I feel very much at ease with him, but I don't know why?

- George: Maybe he's Catholic like you!
- Katrina: Maybe, as all the Catholics are polite and wonderful. But you've already told me that you don't know what denomination he is.
- George: Yes, until now I'm not sure, but his eagerness on my trip to Rome, and my awareness about Catholicism, and how he always agrees with you in your way of thinking assures me that he is a Catholic. Imagine today, he wanted to convince me to be open-minded about Catholicism?!
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! Good, as you may have become closed-minded concerning it, and perhaps you would be able to take advantage of your companion rather than your wife ... I told the kids today that we are definitely traveling to Rome. They are with you now, so you can talk to them about it.
- George: Talk to me, I'm all ears.
- Children: Did you forget Dad!?
- George: Forget what?
- Michael: I asked you if we could see the castle of St. Angelo, and Sally asked to see the Trevi Fountain.
- George: Oh yes. Sorry, I forgot.
- Katrina: I fear that this trip will entail just sitting in the hotel, reading and searching on the computer and discussing all the time.
- George: I promise you that there will be special time for you two.
- Children: Promise, Dad?
- George: Promise, and your Mom's your witness.
- Katrina: And I also promise you, and your Dad's your witness.

The family meeting was intimate until lunch time came and Katrina said to the children:

- Katrina: What do you say if we leave now to have the meal in the Italian restaurant?
- Children: Fantastic!
- Katrina: Let's go, then.

Katrina took the kids and left for lunch while George had his lunch at the hospital and then returned to his reading again. He started reviewing what he had read in depth since he had entered the hospital, so became worried. The

more he read, the more contradictions he saw, especially regarding idol worship in Christianity and the plurality of gods, and also the idea that the pope and clergymen are similar to gods!

He asked himself: “Could it be possible to get rid of these doubts in just one trip! Perhaps then I would see that the pope`s religion is true, and I would become a Catholic like Katrina and Adam!”

(3)

The next day George woke up early, and after breakfast he began reading again, as usual. He had got his hands on an important book that he wanted to read “Forbidden Tales in the Torah” by Jonathan Kirsch. He read the comments of the Washington Post on the book “the author tells us in this amazing book that the Old Testament is filled with some of the most harrowing stories present in Western literature … They had been intentionally hidden after the passage of time as they are shocking stories.” He wondered to himself: “Is it possible for priests and monks to know better than God according to what is better for man to know and what is not? What are the stories that are not known in the Old Testament (Torah)? Why were they hidden? And how? Could they be more bloody or violent than what Levvi told me earlier?” He decided to read some of it before Tom came for his appointment that day..

The book was full of manipulations of translations to hide certain specific topics, even by cutting and deleting from the original Hebrew text to please the readers, arguing that how could we let our children read stories of immorality, nudity and violence? Sometimes the Rabbis claimed that the Bible does not mean what it says. All of these were just attempts to conceal, falsify or change the original text. The same question returned to the mind: does this mean that they know more than God? Or that it is not from God? Or has it been edited and changed so it is other then what came from God?

George continued to read in a state of shock and astonishment; if this is the Bible (the Old Testament) in which all the divine religions believe (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), it negates Christianity and may even negates all heavenly religions! He read in the book; the story of a drunk and naked Noah,

and the story of sex between Lot and his two daughters, and what happened between Reuben, son of Jacob, and between Bilhah secretly behind his father's back or … George abhorred to read those stories of incest. He asked himself: "How could this be the case with the prophets and messengers of God?" George found it very difficult to complete the tales... until he reached to very special part about God, and it read: "God is (described as) moody and ill-natured, and His presence is more destructive than fruitful for the life." He considered them all false descriptions, and he could not worship this god at all! Is it convincible to say such horrible things about God?! The cow worshipers respect the cow more than those who follow the Bible respect God.

George laughed and lay on his back as he read the story of the Holy prostitute Thamara, and how adultery became sacred in the temple! Some scholars said that she may have been a nun, then some of them disagreed and said that she may be a wife of Judah`s son who committed adultery . At that point George was disgusted and felt that he could not continue reading these stories and accounts, and he remembered the scandals of catholic monks and nuns that had spread in the media.

He closed the book and opened the computer, entered into YouTube and wrote "sex scandals of the church". He found a large quantity of videos about sex scandals, so he asked himself: "Should I make the trip to Rome knowing how bad Catholicism is, and should I continue as Katrina and Adam suggested to me? Or I should travel just for enjoyment, and forget the path to happiness?" He knew that if he were to forget the path to happiness, he would return to the path of misery and uncertainty in which he had lived, or he would head to atheism, the destroyer of man just as it destroys the mind and science. He felt that the ideologies were fighting each other in his mind; each ideology even fought itself and its soul first before it fought with the other ideologies, and it reminded him of all his questions he kept asking himself. All this was going on in his head when he heard a voice: it was the doctor who was speaking to him:

- Doctor: George... George.. Can you hear me?
- George: Huh ... yes, sorry!
- Doctor: I have been speaking to you but you were in another world, what are you thinking about?!
- George: I'm thinking about something that I hate very much.

- Doctor: What’s that?!
- George: I hate contradictions and violations of logic and reason.
- Doctor: What do you mean?
- George: Did you hear about the scandals of the monks?!
- Doctor: Oh ... yes.
- George: How’s it possible that people devote themselves to the worship of God but rape children?!
- Doctor: It`s like the doctor who drinks alcohol or takes drugs and he knows the danger and harm!
- George: But what do you think about a doctor who is a heroin dealer?
- Doctor: A useless doctor, he should be expelled from the profession, and his condition should be made known!
- George: But what if the concerning authority doesn’t take any action against them and is just un-functional, and what if it promotes them and facilitates them, and even teaches them the techniques in this regard, or if the system urges that?!
- Doctor: Impossible, but just to complete our analysis, the authority in that case would be in bad hands, and the people should then be warned about the doctors, hospitals and medicine as a whole.
- George: Don’t the sacred teachings include sex, adultery, debauchery and rape?! And don’t the monks know that?! And aren’t the scriptures full of such things, even about the prophets?! Then why don’t we deal with all this as we should?
- Doctor: I don’t understand a word of what you are saying, but I’d prefer not to understand anything from you; do you want us to be atheists and be away from God?! In the field of medicine we know very well that many distinguished doctors are atheists and even closer to psychopaths, or let me say: they’re not happy with their lives. If you want my advice, try to run away from yourself and such thoughts that you have, even if you believe in them. Try to escape by any way ... by playing, by drinking wine, by women or anything.
- George: Is it possible to escape from ourselves and feel happy?!
- Doctor: Unfortunately, this is impossible, but this misery is a blessing compared to the misery of atheism and running away from God ... Sorry for not continuing with this amazing conversation, but I have come to answer your questions regarding your medical condition. You will be discharged this evening and it is recommended that you check your temperature the next two days. Do you have

any questions, but only medical questions?!

- George: No thanks... But do I need to check my temperature after these first two days?
- Doctor: No….you're fine; you need to check your temperature for the coming two days just to make sure that everything is under control. If your temperature is normal, that means you've become completely healthy.

Tom entered and greeted the doctor and George. The doctor stood up to leave for work, and George turned towards him …

- George: I have a non-medical question, if you allow me to ask you?
- Doctor: Fine, but be quick, please!
- George: Since you know that escaping does not bring happiness, then why do you escape?
- Doctor: Fearing atheism, since it is really a misery, in my point of view at least.
- George: Either atheism or escape?! No third option?!
- Doctor: There may be a third option, but I haven't found it yet. If you find it, inform me, I would be grateful ... I`m leaving now, if you have any medical questions before leaving, you can ask the nurse to call me, bye.

Tom looked at the doctor briefly after he had left, and then turned to George ...

- Tom: George! I don't know what was going on in the dialogue between you two, but I know the misery of atheism; worry and distress, and no one knows them like me.
- George: Why is atheism misery, as you say?
- Tom: The hardest thing is not to have anyone you can kneel down to, to whom you can leave all your affairs and problems, or whom can guide you to the right path.
- George: How do I find the guidance to the right path from Him?
- Tom: Through His messengers and books which He sent to us.
- George: Do you expect that He will guide me through a prostitute nun or a rapist monk?
- Tom: I don't understand.
- George: Or through a drunken prophet, or a pornographic sacred book?
- Tom: What`s the matter with you? Why are you speaking like this today?
- George: I`m fed up, Tom! I'm thinking seriously about not going to Rome, or just

traveling as a tourist, for enjoyment.

- Tom: Why ... what's new?
- George: There's nothing new. But I've just read and noticed stories about sex and violence in the Torah and the Gospel.
- Tom: Do you think this is something specific about Catholicism?!
- George: What do you mean?
- Tom: Isn't Protestant's violence like this, or even more than this?! You know who killed Catholic people in Germany and elsewhere in the biggest massacres in history.
- George: Yes! The Protestants. But I'm tired, maybe even from Protestantism!
- Tom: George! Be strong, as you usually are, and beware of being weak. If you persist, you'll reach happiness. But if you don't, you'll be defeated and weakened by the misery of worry and grief.
- George: What should I do?
- Tom: I don't know, but all that I know is that it isn't possible that God hides the path towards Him.
- George: Where`s the path? Don't Christians and Muslims believe in the Old Testament? This book is full of sex and violence; at first I didn't believe what Levvi said about this, but now I'm convinced with what she said. Do you want me to give you some evidence from the Old Testament?!
- Tom: I don't need any evidence at all, but if you want I can give you some evidence from the New Testament.
- George: So why are we searching in Christianity and Islam when they both are in the same direction?
- Tom: We agreed from the start that we would walk on the path and that we would learn, and I don't know why, but I feel that we are getting close to the right path. So don't give up at the end of the race ... George, you're not searching and looking for only yourself, I'm also reading and studying with you, and I'm sure we'll get there, but don't ask me how.
- George: I have the same feeling, but I often feel that I'm probably manipulating myself and my soul, as all evidence indicates that I'm wandering and lost on the path, although internally I feel that I'm closer to it.

- Tom: Travel to Rome and study about the Catholics and Protestants well, and see and discuss about what you've read. But don't make any decision until you have checked all the divine religions.
- George: Are we going to look into Islam too?!
- Tom: Sure, there's no doubt about that. Looking into something doesn't mean believing in it. Haven't you searched and read about Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism? So what's the difference? Didn't we agree previously to wait until we finish studying all divine religions?!
- George: So I will continue, though I don't see anything in front of me but a well of superstitions, violence, pornography and corruption in all that I have read about religions, and even in all the ideas and religions that I haven't read about yet. In spite of this, I'm sure internally that I'll reach the path to happiness.
- Tom: Keep reminding yourself that you'll reach the path to happiness. And remember, if finding the path was clear and easy, we wouldn't need to even search for it!
- George: I'll reach it. Perhaps the solution is next to me, easy and clear, but I can't see it.
- Tom: Maybe the way is Catholicism or Protestantism ... or Islam.
- George: Despite my view that all these ways are full of superstitions, hypocrisy, the exploitation of religion to get power, sex and money, we should continue searching. What do you suggest I do?
- Tom: Have you read a lot?
- George: Yes, all I do is read. By the way, Catholicism doesn't allow us to even read the Bible, except if it is explained by the pope. Why? Do we have to understand what is in the Bible only as the Pope understands it?! Do they want to take over our minds?
- Tom: That's true! But the Protestant makes the religion as he wants it to be, and understands it in the way he likes; for this reason it has split and divided into a lot of groups.
- George: But the New Testament seems to be full of distortions. So whether we understand it as the Pope wants us to or in our own way, it has been distorted. Didn't I tell you that all these religions are useless, and that they are myths?
- Tom: Read more, learn more, discuss more, and open up your mind more, then you will definitely find the path.

- George: But Catholicism is based on sacraments that we are not allowed to discuss; the seven secrets of the church that are only understood by the monks!! Discussing and thinking about them is considered disbelief, although they are contrary to reason and logic!
- Tom: Even Protestants believe in two of these sacraments.
- George: Haven't you noticed that whenever I tell you something, you tell me that the Protestants have the same problem? Are you now a Catholic because you went to a Catholic church with Katrina? I know what you said very well, but I'm talking about Catholicism now.
- Tom: But I don't want you to be prejudiced against any religion without having knowledge or reason to support your views. Say what you want with knowledge and logic; say what you want without being prejudice.
- George: What I said is based on knowledge and reason
- Tom: And what I said is also based on knowledge and reason, I just want you to be more impartial.
- George: Ah ... agreed. Perhaps I'm more biased against Catholics, as what I've said about them also exists in Judaism and Protestantism; and I expect in Islam as well.
- Tom: So let's complete our exploratory trip as calmly as we started, until things become clear to us ... Aren't you the one who said to me: "simply and without complexity"?
- George: Yes, this is one of Adam`s known catch phrases.
- Tom: If a person is calm, he is more balanced and wiser. I also invite you, as I told you at the beginning, to search and not make any decision until things become clear; perhaps you'll choose Judaism, so don't be in a hurry?
- George: To be straight to the point, I don't think it could be Judaism at all; I hate violence, and the Torah is full of it. Can you imagine that in the Old Testament "cursed is he that keeps back his sword from blood," and the God of Israel says: "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor," what kind of maliciousness and terrorism is this?!
- Tom: Don't Christians and Muslims also believe in the Old Testament?! Be easy, and don't make any decision until all things are clear. I'm sure you'll reach the path to happiness.

- George: This is the biggest problem I have. Christians believe that the New Testament complements the Old Testament, and I think the Muslims think the same, so they all are religions of violence and terror.
- Tom: Here are two points: first, it's not reasonable to rely on conjecture in such topics; you must build your opinion on knowledge. Second: I wish you would be more precise. What do you mean by saying that the New Testament complements the Old Testament? Does this mean that they believe in it, or not?
- George: I agree with what you said. Guessing is different from having facts and knowledge, and also checking and proving facts are very important matters, but unfortunately the Christians didn't exert any effort to write clear, authentic expressions that complement each other. And I am not the one who is allowed to analyze; as the Catholics, for example, prevent their followers from understanding even the New Testament, and believe that it should be understood by the monks and then the monks can explain it to the public, like you and me, otherwise you may come across some texts in the New Testament like "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword", or " But those my enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring here, and slay them before me.."
- Tom: You know that there are Christian interpretations for these words.
- George: Yes, we have different interpretations, and we have texts opposite to this which encourage mercy and love. And whether they are logical interpretations or not, they are still only interpretations, and these interpretations are not consistent with the views that are written in the Old Testament which is full of phrases similar to what I have just mentioned. And also unfortunately our actions are proof of the violence mentioned in the Old Testament, not just with others, but between ourselves as well. Do you want some examples to remind you of our brutality?!
- Tom: This is not the topic we are studying now; let's keep things in their correct place, and look at things as a whole. While looking at any religion, it is appropriate to focus on God, the messengers, books, beliefs, its rules, its history, and its implementation, and it's better to study these foundations without looking into small details.
- George: Good, but how?
- Tom: Instead of focusing on certain statements in the Old or New Testament and their interpretations, have a general look at the Bible in terms of its authenticity,

how it reached us, and who wrote it. Study its teachings and beliefs in God and the prophets, and use the remaining small details as evidence to prove the main points.

- George: Very nice. Though I have read a lot about it, maybe I should change the view I have about the Bible until I read more and discuss it more.
- Tom: To explain, let's presume that you've finished the subject of Judaism, as you say. So what are the books of the Old Testament, what are its teachings and view of God's prophets?
- Tom: And let`s suppose it`s from God.
- Tom: Then was it written by God? Or was it written by Prophet Moses, or by Aaron? Do you know the writer?
- George: And I think one can say the same about the New Testament, isn't that so?
- Tom: Without any doubt, otherwise I would be biased. This way of thinking is closer to finding the path to happiness, if we don't engage ourselves in details.
- George: Good idea, and I agree with you.
- Tom: When you return from Rome, we'll be able to assess the two most important religions among the divine religions, leaving only one left to study until everything will be clear to us, and then our exploratory trip in the search for happiness will end.
- George: But what if we find them all to be false, useless and fake?!
- Tom: If I was now like what I used to be, I would have told you to return to atheism, as I did not encourage you to follow this path but to make you return to atheism. But now I say to you that if it appears that all of them are not suitable, then we should return to repeat our search once again, from the beginning. We would start once more with the question: Is religion important? Then how can we choose a religion? And so on until we get to where we are now, but things would be clearer to us.
- George: A very long way to go?
- Tom: I expect we will not return to the beginning again, and I hope that will be the case, but the issue is related to knowledge, which means that whenever our knowledge increases, our understanding will increase, and vice versa; whenever ignorance increases, our ability to find answers to our questions becomes less, and this would make us farther from the path to happiness; but I'm sure you'll reach it, just be patient for a little while longer.

- George: I have to reach it. Then he smiled and said: What could tire me more than not finding the way to the path to happiness?
- Tom: The way that should be taken to reach the path to happiness is clear, but what you are still not able to see is the path itself. Many people think that the way taken to reach the path to happiness is the actual path they are searching for, but they do not see the path itself.
- George: Beautiful philosophy, but explain to me how we can see the way to reach the road to happiness clearly.
- Tom: Don't you know that at the beginning you refused the way of atheism and secularism? Then you refused man-made religions? Then you started to differentiate between the different divine religions. Isn't that so?
- George: I agree with you completely, but what is not clear to me is how we'll reach our goal?
- Tom: That's what I told you, what is not clear to you is the path itself, and not how to reach the path to happiness;
- George: Ha ha ha! Nice, but putting this aside.. What advice do you have for me for my trip?
- Tom: First: enjoy the trip and relax with your children; you need to relieve your mind, and to sort out and make use of the large amount of information that you have collected from what you have read and from your discussions. Second: continue reading and having discussions, but with an open mind, and pay attention to the core issues, not the outward formalities. Third: meditation will help you to sort out and arrange your information, and will help you to focus on the core issues.
- George: I think this is important advice, and I will try my best to follow it. Although I am only searching for answers to my questions, I find that I have become more irritable.
- Tom: Irritability is caused by the pressure on your mind, pressure is caused by knowing too much information, and also the pressure from those around you, so the load on your mind has increased. Decrease it by taking my advice.
- George: Yes I shall. I've also promised my children this too.
- Tom: Have a happy trip, and I'll meet you after your return, when you'll be more relaxed and have more information, and be more open-minded.

- George: What's the latest about Brad?
- Tom: It seems that the problem is getting worse; he has started to openly threaten me with some pictures and recordings that he has.
- George: He threatened you?!
- Tom: Yes, he has old unethical pictures of me with some patients, and has recordings of some of the sessions, and has started bargaining with me about them, saying he's going to present them to the medical committees and medical unions if I don't do what he wants.
- George: What harm can happen to you if he presents them to the unions?
- Tom: It'll cause the withdrawal of my professional license, and it will be considered as a public scandal.
- George: What is he bargaining for?
- Tom: For me to work with him.
- George: What work?
- Tom: Ha ha ha! Selling drugs, and carrying out his orders.
- George: It is better that he informs the union than you become a drug dealer.
- Tom: Your're right ... but if I'm dismissed from the profession, it's also a major disaster.
- George: What will you do?
- Tom: I don't know, I'll have to think hard about it. I'm leaving now, bye!

George began to read again. He was very happy that he had meet Tom. He felt reassured and relaxed after the meeting; he accepted his words and decided to do what Tom suggested, as much as he could. But his mind became busy thinking how he could help Tom with his problem with Brad. He was convinced that Tom had changed, and he did not want to leave him alone, but what could he do?

While he was thinking about the problem, he checked his e-mail and found two letters from Habib and Levvi, inquiring about his health. He replied:

"Dear Habib,

The operation was successful, and I can give you the good news that I'm fine, healthy and well. I will be traveling to Rome in two days, and how much I wish you were with me so you could explain to me, with your knowledge and your open mind, some of the problems I have found in Catholicism.

Your friend,
George”

Dear Levvi,

The operation was successful, and I can give you the good news that I’m fine, healthy and well. I will be traveling to Rome in two days, and how much I wish you were with me so you could explain to me, with your knowledge and your open mind, some of the problems I have found in the Torah and Judaism.

Your friend
George”

While he was browsing the messages, Katrina entered...

- Katrina: The procedures of your discharge will start shortly, God willing.
- George: I miss the house, and the people and the cars in the street a lot.
- Katrina: Your absence was very difficult for me and the children ... But you were busy reading and having dialogues. Did Tom come today?
- George: Yes, and the session was great.
- Katrina: I knew it would be.
- George: When will I leave the hospital?
- Katrina: In a short while, there is still some paperwork that has to be completed. I’m going to complete them now and then I’ll come back so we can leave, and you can tell me on the way what was discussed between you and Tom today.

(4)

The family left for the airport two hours before the flight. They boarded the plane to fly to ancient Rome. After they landed they went straight to their lodging. Katrina planned everything for this trip very carefully; she reserved the rooms in Hotel Raphael, one street away from Piazza Navona, and from where there was a panoramic view of the city of Rome, from the Church of St. Peter’s until the Pantheon temple. Ravel Hotel bus lines were also near, and most places of historical attractions in the city of Rome were within walking distance...

George: Katrina! Your choice is wonderful.

- Michael: Thanks, Mum. I feel that I’m right beside the castle that I wanted to see.
- Katrina: We’re not far away from the fountain which you wanted to see either, Sally!
  George: It`s 7 o`clock, what do you think about exploring the hotel now, then we can eat dinner and take a rest in order to start our schedule tomorrow morning refreshed?

- Children: Alright Dad, as you like.

The family woke up early the next morning and ate breakfast in the hotel restaurant. Then they went out with a tourist guide to an area close by which was full of historical places. The family was very happy when they were looking at the ancient Roman buildings and magnificent statues. The churches were excellent structures, which left a feeling of grandeur and a fragrance of history. At dinner time they went to a modern Italian restaurant in Rome...

- Michael: Dad, I never thought that the Roman civilization was so strong and beautiful!
- George: The ancient Roman civilization is very great, Michael. It's considered to be one of the greatest civilizations of Europe, after the Greek civilization; it extended its control over all the peninsula of Italy in 275 BC, and during the following two centuries Rome managed to build an empire that included all of Europe and North Africa, and the Greek culture also integrated in it.
- Sally: But what makes it special is this delicious pizza, not the statues that are outside.
- Katrina: Do you like these statues, Michael?
- Michael: They're beautifully constructed.

Katrina, with a delightful smile:

- Katrina: What beautiful statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary!
- George: I don't know why these sculptures and statues of Jesus remind me of the statues of Buddha and other idols in India. I feel that they're all the same.
- Katrina: Let's leave this point now, if we have finished our lunch we'll head to the other part of our tour.

George understood that Katrina did not want to debate in front of the children. He agreed with her, but his mind did not stop linking the statues of Jesus with Buddha, and also the beliefs of the idol worshiper and Catholic beliefs.

The family completed the tour and returned to the hotel shortly after sunset. They ate dinner in the hotel, and went up to the room ... George checked his e-mail to review the messages, and found a message from Habib:

"Dear George,

This letter is from both Levvi and I. We have read your message and we are very happy about the success of the operation, and hope we will celebrate the success of your operation with you soon. Concerning the problems you have found in Catholicism and Judaism, we would be happy to talk with you about it. We would even be happy to discuss with you about Protestantism and Islam, so we are waiting to have a dialogue with you on these issues.

Habib & Levvi"

Note from Habib: do not forget to visit the Pope at mass on the Sabbath.

So he replied to them:

"Hello Habib and Levvi,

I am now in Rome, the country of Catholics, and close to the Catholic Vatican . And I am pleased that you are happy. For the problems that I have, I will send them to you in a text, and I will wait for your brief comments on them ... I will quote a paragraph from the book "Forbidden Tales in the Torah" by Jonathan Kerech, and this paragraph talks about the Torah as follows:

From the beginning to the end of the book, according to Michel Ventura a journalist, whose mind was totally boggled by what exactly he found in the Torah, scenes of wild destructive behavior are portrayed,. "Women marry snakes, brothers kill each other, people are slaughtered en masse, tribes wander aimlessly in the desert, infants are snatched from their mothers, and criminals become prophets, and prophets become criminals, and dancers demand the heads of the prophets," then Ventura reaches a conclusion, saying: "Any society which raises the Torah to the level of a sacred book could face insanity." And this is something funny which he adds, "We expect the civilization which is based on such a book to be nothing but a community which is wild and vandalous." Do you agree with Ventura or not? Note that all divine religions believe in this sacred book!

Greetings and best wishes to you two.

George"

He decided to also send the text to Adam and Tom, in a single message. Then he sat, thinking: "Do I agree with what Ventura said?!" He wanted to discuss this idea the following day with those whom Katrina had made an appointment with...

After breakfast in the morning, Katrina went out with the children to the

market while George sat waiting for the arrival of Janolka Francoa, according to Katrina`s arrangements. Janolka was an Italian journalist and all his research was about Catholicism and Protestantism, according to Katrina. He arrived exactly at 11 am at the hotel; George welcomed him, and he replied tactfully, saying:

- Janolka: According to what I received from one of my friends who are priests: you are searching for answers to your major questions, and your wife who is a nun called my friend, the Rev. Luigi Stiavnoa, and told him this. So let me introduce myself.
- George: Yes that's partly true, but my wife is not a nun, and she'll be here soon. Pleased to meet you.
- Janolka: I'm an Italian journalist. I studied philosophy at university and loved it very much, as it included the most important philosophical questions. Then he smiled and said: Of course, concerning the major questions in life; I've spent years searching for answers to those questions.
- George: That's why the priest that Katrina contacted talked to you.
- Janolka: Yes!
- George: And what is the result of those years of searching?
- Janolka: I reached important results and specific points.
- George: Wonderful! What are they?!
- Janolka: Simply ... nothing! Because all that I have is just criticism of the shameful reality of religions, but not anything to build on or any complete idea.
- George: Than how can you guide me, as the result of your research is nothing?!
- Janolka: I actually have very useful experiences that may be useful for you, just as I may be able to benefit from your experience too. But with regards to the result of my search for an answer to questions, unfortunately there is nothing!
- George: Do you think that nothing could be the answer of something?
- Janolka: Wonderful! You are deep and simple at the same time, please continue!
- George: Continue what? I'm supposed to be asking and you are supposed to be answering me.
- Janolka: The answer is clear, and that's why I didn't answer. Surely it is not possible for nothing to be the answer. Please continue.
- George: So that means there is an answer, but you haven't reached it yet.

- Janolka: Mental logic indicates that there may be an answer, or may be no answer.
- George: I don’t think that the mind supports the idea that there isn’t any answer, as this symbolizes that humanity is floating around in a loss. And this generates absurd, frivolous and negative theories.
- Janolka: You’re an excellent philosopher. This is the same view that I have, but I said what I said to see what you would say ... but in your opinion, where can I find the answer to my questions?
- George: I’m looking and up to now I haven’t found anything, so what is your opinion?
- Janolka: A large number of my friends are atheists, and they wanted to convince me that life has nothing to do with God, and that the answer to my questions has to be explained according to an empirical scientific basis, or by pure coincidence.
- George: Well, did they answer all your questions?
- Janolka: Atheism is a trivial philosophy. It is nothing but superstitious stories and mythical legends, even if it pretends to be scientific and rely on knowledge. Believe me; I know atheism well, and I have discussed it with many people.
- George: It looks as though you are prejudiced against atheism and secular thought.
- Janolka: I’m afraid that you’re an atheist, and that’s why you defend them. But I’ll speak frankly with you, and let me speak in detail. All the atheists know inside themselves that they’re wrong. I was an atheist, and I lived a period of time in atheism. Atheism is only a type of escape from the problems of religion, and it doesn’t possess any philosophy, theory or evidence, either logical or scientific. As for secularism, they believe in religion, but they want to expel religion from life for the same reason as atheists.
- George: How?
- Janolka: The problem of the conflict between religion and science is an old, chronic problem. When religion contradicts science, people consider the credibility of science to be higher than the credibility of religion.
- George: Can our knowledge be better than the knowledge that comes from God?
- Janolka: Of course not, but can that which is wrong or impossible come from God?!
- George: What do you mean?
- Janolka: When people hear or read the commandments in the Bible ordering them- for example- to commit murder or adultery, or drink alcohol, and they are

sure of the harm of these things, according to reason, recorded facts and science, what are they supposed to do?

- George: So you turned to secularism to relieve yourself from answering the major questions?
- Janolka: Yes, but unfortunately secularism doesn't relieve anything at all. But I'm talking about one who embraces secularism; he tries to solve the problem of incompatibility between religion and science, and tries to solve the problem seen throughout history. But if you want the truth; secularism is very similar to Christianity.
- George: Beautiful ... but explain the last point to me.
- Janolka: The papacy permits you to do what you want; they sell you forgiveness, and the problem is finished; and therefore you can do what you want even if it is prohibited in the religion, just to buy forgiveness once again. George: But Protestants don't believe in this, isn't that so?!
- Janolka: Yes, perhaps because they are less religious, but it is not because they don't separate the religion from life, as they actually separate it officially. I think the church is the biggest motivator for secularization and even atheism!
- George: What do you believe?! Which religion do you profess?! One time you defended atheism, another time secularism, and a third time Catholicism! Janolka: I'm nothing, didn't I tell you that before? And what about you?
- George: Protestant because my father and mother were, and then nothing!
- Janolka: Ha ha ha! ... so we're like each other.
- George: Are you happy to have reached nothing? Do you feel that you have reached something?
- Janolka: Nothing can never lead to anything. No one can consider it an achievement! Perhaps this is because of the emergence, development and diversity of sects as well as useless movements in the West.
- George: Useless movements?
- Janolka: Ha ha ha! Yes, the movements which build their religion on the basis of nothing or are based on a trivial matter are far away from the true religion.
- George: Then this is the disaster of not having anything?
- Janolka: But the real disaster is that the questions of life are not answered.
- George: So why don't you just forget them and escape from them?
- Janolka: I can't and I don't think that any intelligent or wise person could.

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- George: Do you mean that the majority of the people are crazy and stupid?
- Janolka: I mean that the majority of the people can't forget these questions, and their lives have been spoiled and they are far from being happy.
- George: You're a philosopher, but a pessimistic one. But you don't have anything and you haven't reached anything but nothingness. So what is the solution then?
- Janolka: My solution is to continue until we find answers to the questions ... and what solution do you have?
- George: It is what you have just said, but I disagree with you in that I feel that I'll reach the answer very soon.
- Janolka: Optimism is a blessing from God, and I hope that your optimism is appropriate, but one has to have a reason to be optimistic.
- George: The reason is that we are travelling on the path to happiness, without being pessimistic, or hesitating, and without any doubt.
- Janolka: Excellent ... great, so where are you on this path?
- George: I have finished atheism and man-made religions. They do not benefit us, as you have mentioned, and then I began examining the divine religions. And now, I've reached Christianity.
- Janolka: My ancestors were Catholics. However, I'm telling you that I don't believe in anything in Catholicism; it is a bunch of superstitions, mysteries and contradictions.
- George: Why don't you become a Protestant?
- Janolka: I apologize to you, O Protestant; I started with my religion first, as Protestantism is just an attempt to escape from the superstitions of Catholicism, but it is a failed attempt because of the lack of religiosity it has. The Protestants just gathered some superstitions of Catholicism and their mysteries, but lack religiosity.
- George: Explain more, sometimes you seem ambiguous.
- Janolka: Aren't both of them, I mean Catholics and Protestants, dependent on the Bible, including the Old and New Testament. But these are the source of myths and superstitions.
- George: How can you say that about the Bible which has been revealed by God?!

Janolka: You are just like my friend who is a priest, but I will answer you as I answered him. Answer me honestly; can you prove that what exists in our hands has been revealed from God? I can prove that at least some parts are not from God.

- George: How can you prove that?
- Janolka: There is so much proof. –For example, you can read, if you wish, the history of how the Bible was compiled. Even historical facts are against one who says it has been revealed from God. Look at the contradictions it has, and even various versions and different translations contradict each other. Or read, if you like, the contradictions in just one version. If you read about some incidents which are mentioned you will see that they are not from God at all; if you read, you find that this Lord is evil, do you want other proof? Do you want me to elaborate on any proof?
- George: I agree with you, though I would like to discuss it with a priest or someone else; to hear their opinion.
- Janolka: You're strange, then why are you disputing with me about this?
- George: If the situation is as you said, then what is the solution?
- Janolka: I told you that my result is nothing.
- George: Sorry, but nothing means a lack of information, and I want someone who has knowledge and is aware.
- Janolka: What you say is true, but I don't have knowledge.
- George: In your opinion, who has the answer?
- Janolka: If I knew him, I would have gotten rid of my problem which I have been facing for a long time.
- George: I'd like to meet one of the priests if possible, because I want to hear his response to these arguments and others.
- Janolka: So many priests are my friends. Do you want fanatical scholars or open-minded ones? Do you want scholars or students?
- George: If I could choose, the open-minded is better than one who is closed-minded, but what is more important, I want the one who has more knowledge, whether he is open-minded or closed.
- Janolka: Don't worry, the more knowledgeable one is more open-minded. I'll arrange an appointment with my friend the Rev. Luigi Stiavnoa, the one whom your wife talked to. He is the most knowledgeable and open-minded among all the priests, in my opinion. The meeting may be tomorrow or the day after, I'll let you know.
- George: Thanks a lot!

- Janolka: I can understand what you said and I am happy to help you.

George smiled and said:

- George: I feel that I might have tired you out, but I have a question: did you study Islam?
- Janolka: No ... I only read some brief notes and had a few discussions about it.
- George: Why?
- Janolka: Islam is a religion of violence and jihad, the oppression of women and backwardness, and many other things like this.
- George: And how do you know all this when you haven't studied Islam?
- Janolka: The owner of the restaurant next door to my house is a Muslim from Egypt, and I discuss with him sometimes.
- George: Does he say this about himself?
- Janolka: No one says this about himself, but he says he is a civilized Muslim, not like extremist Muslims. And when I asked him about the reason of the backwardness of the Muslims, he said: "The reason is the Islamic religion, as it promotes strict views, the killing of those who have different views to them, and the imprisonment of women, even hitting her."
- George: Very strange. Is it possible for me to see him too.
- Janolka: You are very strange! What do you want from him? Any way, we can eat lunch or dinner in his restaurant near my house any time, and then you can talk with him.
- George: Good, but I have another question, if you allow me.
- Janolka: Sure!
- George: Why did the priest send you to me and he knows your opinion about Catholicism?
- Janolka: Didn't I tell you before that he is open-minded? I often feel that he's convinced with what I have said, but he doesn't know which way is the perfect choice!
- George: Excellent opinion, as if we don't know how to answer our questions, then it is better to stay as we are than to be lost, having nothing.
- Janolka: True, but please don't consider me to be lost or having nothing, because I'm still searching.
- George: Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you at all.
- Janolka: I know.

Katrina returned with Michael and Sally. They met Janolka and Katrina shook hands with him and welcomed him ...

- Katrina: Thank God, I reached before you left. Weren't you sent by Rev. Luigi Stiavnoa?

- Janolka: Yes, and you're George`s wife. The priest says that you are among the most religious Catholics in Britain, although you aren't a nun.
- Katrina: Thank you very much. And Luigi is my teacher, as I listen to his lectures and sermons.
- Janolka: I'll arrange for you a meeting with him tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.
- Katrina: Wonderful ... if George agrees.
- Janolka: George is the one who asked for this. And you will have a meal in a luxurious restaurant.
- Katrina: Great, I'll see my teacher ...but why this particular restaurant?
- George: Please tell her, Janolka ...
- Janolka: Just to meet a Muslim.
- Katrina: Why?
- Janolka: I don't know, but he wants to hear from him about the backwardness and savageness of Islam.
- Katrina: I'll tell you what that Muslim won't tell you; you can look at their underdeveloped countries to understand the backwardness of their religion.
- Janolka: This is my card, and I will be happy if you ring me to ask about any information concerning religion or tourism. I'll call you to confirm the meeting with my friend Rev. Luigi Stiavnoa. See you!

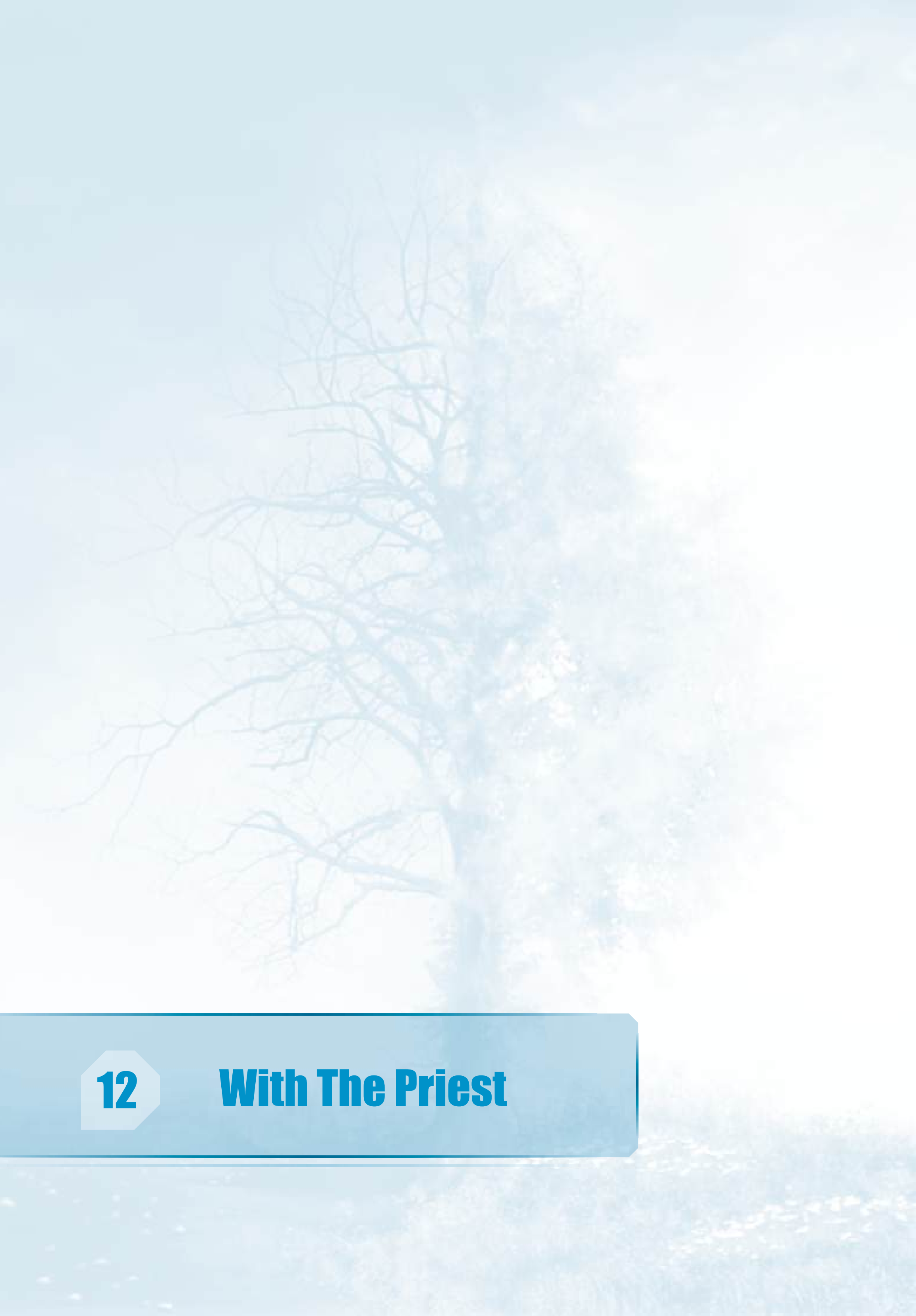
Janolka left, and Katrina smiled and turned to George and said:

- Katrina: How was the meeting? I wished I could've come back earlier to have joined you.
- George: Very good! Thank you.
- Katrina: Of course ... the priest will never send anyone except a person who is a religious Catholic scholar.
- George: Yes ... he is a philosopher and a scholar, but he is not a religious Catholic, as you say.
- Katrina: This is weird! He told me that he is his friend.
- George: Yes, he is his friend.

- Katrina: Is it possible that the priest has friends who are not religious?! Anyway, it is important to arrange our meeting with the priest so that we may benefit from him.
- George: It is good to benefit from everybody, even the priest. Any way, what did you do in the market?
- Katrina: The picnic was enjoyable. The children played in the amusement park in the market, then we took a quick tour of the market and bought some things we needed. We were late because of the traffic
- George: What landmarks of city will we visit today?
- Katrina: The castle of St. Angelo, because Michael wants to see it. It's a wonderful castle and also nearby, and we can spend all the day there.
- George: Let's go now. Where are Michael and Sally?
- Katrina: They are putting on their new shoes in their room, so we can go now.

The family left to see Saint Angelo's Castle. George decided to take Tom's advice, which was to lessen his concerns and worries, and devote himself to the picnic and keeping himself busy with his children, trying not to think too much about the path to happiness, or to worry and complain. In order to reach to the answer to his questions he should look for them quietly and calmly...

With The Priest



12

With The Priest

With The Priest

(1)

The family returned to the hotel in the evening and later George received a call from Janolka telling him that the appointment with the priest, Luigi, would be at the church at 10 a.m. the following day, and that he was expecting them.

- George: Katrina, that was Janolka informing us that the appointment with the priest is tomorrow at 10a.m., but what shall we do with the kids?
- Katrina: We can either take them with us or leave them at the park next to the church – it's a wonderful park.
- George: I think it will be better to leave them at the park.

At 8:30am, George, Katrina and the kids went to the fantastic playground in the park next to the church. They left Michael and Sally there after they had asked the caretaker to watch over them. The couple then went to the church to meet with the priest, for their 10 a.m. appointment. Janolka welcomed them and then they went to meet the priest, Luigi, who warmly received them.

- Father Luigi: Hello, Katrina. I've heard about your great efforts in Britain, may God bless you.
- Katrina: This is due to what we've learned from you and your knowledge from which we have benefited.
-
- Father Luigi: Hello George. Janolka has told me about your questions and his admiration for the way you think; so please, go ahead and ask anything you want.
-
- George: I have four questions. I don't want to waste your time so I'll get straight to the point. The first one is: I can't understand how come the Lord is one and three at the same time? I've read a lot about this and heard many explanations, but I haven't managed to reach an answer yet, and - I apologize for saying this - I get the feeling that Christianity is just like paganism.

The expression of the priest's face changed. He looked at Janolka's and Katrina's faces, and then gazed down and said:

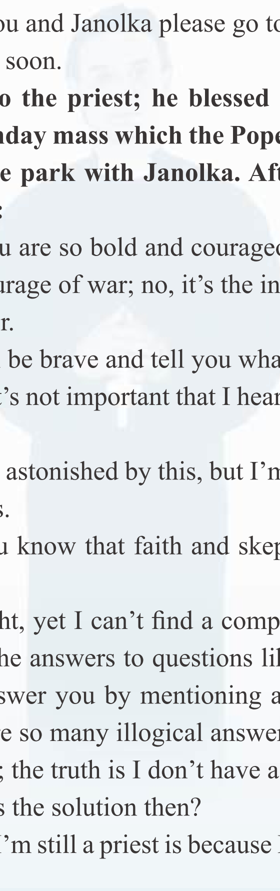
- Father Luigi: And what's the second question?
- George: Is Jesus divine or human? Is he a god to be worshipped or a servant who was murdered? Did the Lord have to die to save humanity?! Isn't it possible to save humanity without needing to die?
- Father Luigi: Okay George, what is the third question?
- George: The Old and New Testament of the Bible, who wrote them? Who translated them? Who passed them to us? And why are there so many contradictions between its different versions? Also I'm ashamed to read much of it to my children, so how can it be from my Lord?!
- Father Luigi: I listening George, what is the fourth?
- George: Is the history of religion and the prophets a history of murder and immoral actions? I hate violence and murder, and I hate those who encourage them, yet I am surprised at the biblical accounts of the prophets and messengers; I'm also surprised at the texts of murder and lootings!

The priest raised his head and looked into Katrina's and George's eyes before turning to Janolka, then he said:

- Father Luigi: Why didn't you tell me about his questions earlier?
- Janolka: Because he didn't tell me about them!

Father Luigi stared at George, then he looked up with a tired yet tough expression, and said with a deep sigh ..

- Father Luigi: O my son, it is difficult to find the answers to all these questions. Also explaining them will take a long time and a great deal of effort. Why don't you, instead, dedicate yourself to the service of God?
- George: Father, I came to learn and benefit from your knowledge, and no matter how long any explanation may be, it is possible for a scholar to summarize it to make it clear.
- Father Luigi: Well, my son, there are a number of mysteries related to religion which must remain as mysteries; and there are a number of texts which you can't understand by yourself.
- George: Father, as for the mysteries: how can it be possible that we're commanded to follow a religion from God which is made-up of mysteries? And how is it possible that the texts are from God for all humans, but only a few can understand



them?!

At this stage of the conversation it became clear on the priest's face that he did not like such words, so he gazed down and said to Katrina and Janolka:

- Father Luigi: Could you please leave me alone with George?

Janolka's facial expression changed and it became clear that he disliked this request, as how could his friend exclude him from a meeting that he had arranged in the first place?!

- Janolka: Do you want me and Katrina to leave? Why? Is there another big mystery?!
- Father Luigi: I just want to discuss something with him privately, so I'd be grateful if you two would leave.
- George: Katrina, could you and Janolka please go to Michael and Sally, and wait for me there. I'll join you soon.

Katrina said goodbye to the priest; he blessed her and confirmed that he would be attending the Sunday mass which the Pope himself would be celebrating. So she left to go to the park with Janolka. After they had left, the priest turned to George and said:

- Father Luigi: My son, you are so bold and courageous. The kind of courage I'm talking about isn't the courage of war; no, it's the internal kind of courage.
- George: Thank you, father.
- Father Luigi: My son, I'll be brave and tell you what you may dislike to hear.
- George: Please, tell me. It's not important that I hear what I like, but rather I want to hear the truth.
- Father Luigi: You may be astonished by this, but I'm sorry, there are no complete answers to your questions.
- George: Father, don't you know that faith and skepticism cannot be present together at the same time?
- Father Luigi: You are right, yet I can't find a complete answer. I have spent my entire life searching for the answers to questions like the ones you've just mentioned. If I wanted to answer you by mentioning any illogical answer, I would have done so - as there are so many illogical answers! But I promised you I'd be bold and honest with you; the truth is I don't have a complete answer.
- George: So father, what is the solution then?
- Father Luigi: The reason I'm still a priest is because I haven't found anything bet-

ter yet. To have questions about some points is better than being uncertain about everything, isn't it?

- George: You're right, but to find the answers is better, of course!
- Father Luigi: Yes, you might find these answers, but one thing I'm certain of is that you will not find them in the church. I have been a priest in this church for more than thirty years, but I haven't been able to find the answers. So let's leave it at that.
- George: May I ask you a question, father?
- Father Luigi: Yes, please. Go ahead.
- George: Why did you ask Janolka and Katrina to leave?
- Father Luigi: You might be surprised by what I'll tell you. It was because of my lack of courage, no one likes to seem weak and foolish in front of others, especially if they believe that he is knowledgeable and if his opinions are greatly respected. And if they were to leave Catholicism or Christianity as a result, what would they turn to? Atheism? I think having minor doubts is better than living in a world full of doubts and uncertainty!
- George: I apologize, but aren't there any other brave priests and monks who declare what you have just said?
- Father Luigi: Yes, there have been some throughout the history of Christianity, but they were either killed, made to disappear or ran away; the papacy is very harsh about such cases.
- George: So you think there is a secret relationship between the Vatican and the intelligence agencies, as confirmed by Eric Frattini in his book «The Entity: Five Centuries of Secret Vatican Espionage"?
- Father Luigi: Of course not ... that's wrong! It's just a prejudiced view of an American protestant against the Catholic church.
- George: But what about the facts he mentioned?
- Father Luigi: Most of them, unfortunately, are true, but he explained them while being biased against the Catholic Church and the papacy.
- George: But the infiltration of the Vatican's intelligence agency is a fact, in other words the Vatican's intelligence agency is present in all corners of the world, isn't that the case?
- Father Luigi: Yes, regrettably, but it's not normal, although it does happen quite a lot.

- George: But why doesn’t it deal harshly with the sex scandals of monks and nuns?
- Father Luigi: That’s impossible! Do you expect them to cause a split in the church for the sake of some children?! Also, some of these sex stories are even stated in the teachings of the Bible. He continued by saying: You are an educated reader, so use your research in a way that will benefit you, my son. Can we stop now please?
- George: Father, what shall I say to Katrina and Janolka if they ask me why you made them leave?

Father Luigi kept silent, then he looked down and said:

- Father Luigi: The truth is always the best thing to say.
- George: Thank you, father, I’ll tell them the truth, God willing. I’ve learnt a lot from you.
- Father Luigi: Thank you, my son, may God bless you. Hope to see you at the holy mass on Sunday, as some certainty is better than total skepticism.
- George left and went to the park to find Katrina and Janolka waiting for him. When he arrived, Janolka asked:
- Janolka: Why did father Luigi ask us to leave? This is the first time I have seen the father acting improperly!

George didn’t want to discuss the matter, especially since it was obvious that Janolka was anger.

- George: It’s nearly lunch time. Are we near El-Fakhama restaurant which is next to your house, so that we can eat together and have a chat.
- Janolka: Yes, it’s only a five minute walk away.
- George: Is it alright if I sit with the kids a bit, and then go with you to the restaurant after half an hour or so. What do you think, Katrina?
- Katrina: Fine, no problem. But I had hoped you would have told us in this half an hour what you and father Luigi had talked about. In any case, after half an hour we will know everything.

While George was at the playground with his kids, he started to think of what he should say to Janolka and Katrina. Should he tell them exactly what happened, whatever the outcome might be, or what should he do?

When half an hour had elapsed, George returned with his children, and he said to Katrina and Janolka:

- George: We’re so hungry now, let’s go to eat.
- Katrina and Janolka: Okay, let’s go then.

(2)

They reached El-Fakhama Restaurant after about a five minute walk. George leaned close to Michael and Sally and said:

- George: My little darlings, how about dinning on the terrace of the restaurant?
- The kids: Yes, okay. But where will you and Mum eat?
- George: We have an important appointment, so its better if you both eat there so the two of you can chat with each other and enjoy the beautiful scenery.
- Michael: Okay, Dad. Let's go, Sally.

George, Katrina and Janolka sat at a table in the center of the restaurant. As they looked at the menu, George turned to Janolka and said:

- George: Janolka, where is your Muslim friend?
- Janolka: I feared that he'd ask to talk to you alone and that you'd leave us again. Anyway, he will come soon to take the orders.
- George: It wasn't me who asked you to leave; it was your friend, the priest, who asked you.
- Janolka: But you agreed straight away.
- George (Laughing): Ha ha ha! Well, aren't we supposed to obey men of God?! Anyhow, let me tell you what he said. He said that he wanted to tell me that there were no answers to my questions, but he didn't want you to think he was weak or foolish.

Katrina took offense and looked into George's eyes, then said:

- Katrina: It's impossible that the priest couldn't answer such simple questions!
- Janolka: I know that he has no answers, and he knows that I know that. So why did he ask us to leave? I think that there is another reason.
- George: You should ask him. You know him better than I do. I think he was ashamed to ask Katrina to leave by herself.

A period of silence passed, and George saw confusion and doubt, for the first time, in Katrina's expression of bewilderment on her face - as if her eyes were expressing the anxiety inside that she was trying to overcome and hide. Perhaps her silence could be compared to a volcano when it is latent, when only smoke is visible. As for Janolka, his silence was because of his friend's behavior although he knew his views, as if he still had doubts about what George had said and that something else had happened behind the scenes.

The waiter interrupted the intense silence when he came to take their orders. Janolka asked him about Selim, the owner of the restaurant, and if it was possible to see him.

- Waiter: Mr. Selim is in a meeting in his office with some colleagues. I'll tell him that you want to see him. Can I take your lunch order now?

The waiter took their orders, and George told him where Michael and Sally were sitting to take them their orders when they were ready. Then he looked at Janolka and asked:

- George: Janolka, is Selim that Muslim you were talking about?
- Janolka: Yes, when you first see him you may think he's Italian… By the way, he speaks English fluently.
- George: That's good. I hope he comes soon so we can speak to him.

Katrina started to talk after a long silence, saying:

- Katrina: Now, let's return to the priest. You said he couldn't answer your questions!
- George: Yes, he even said that all his life he had tried himself to answer them as well as many other questions, but he couldn't find any convincing answer.
- Katrina: Impossible!
- Janolka: Katrina, the priest you're talking about is my friend. I'm sure that he doesn't know the answers as I've discussed these and others matters with him several times. But the thing that amazes me is why he asked us to leave?! This is what I don't understand!
- Katrina: Priest Luigi Staveno is one of the people who helped me to be certain in my faith. How can he have such doubts?!

Janolka sighed, looked up and said:

- Janolka: In my experience I have found that as much as the knowledge of a priest increases, his private conversations become more flexible, and the effect he has on the general public according to what they need increases.
- George: What do you mean by that?
- Janolka: What you generally hear from him is what he says to the public, but what he said to you in private was something else. This is what I understood. What do you expect him to say to the public? Do you expect him to say that he doesn't know about God; or that the Bible is corrupted or forged?!

Katrina's eyes filled with tears while she said:

- Katrina: No! I want him to say that even if the Generous, the Merciful and the One Lord is three persons, He is the One who sent down the Bible.

Janolka looked pitifully at Katrina and said:

- Janolka: What then should we do with the contradictions in the bible?! Could you please explain to me, in a convincing and logical way, how can God be three –in –one and one-in –three at the same time?! I hope you will not reply with what is said in the churches, as I have heard this reply a thousand times, and am still not convinced. I'm convinced that such a reply is only suitable when addressing the general public.

George noticed Katrina's anxiety and the volcano that was exploding within herself. He said to himself:

"Perhaps the shock of the news of the priest was too much for her to endure, so I'll try to change the subject …"

- George: How about talking about that some other time? Look, someone is coming towards us.
- Janolka: Yeah, that's Selim. Hello Selim, some people here want to meet you.
- Selim: Hello everyone, and welcome to my restaurant.
- Janolka: It's the first time that my friends have sat with a Muslim, and they would like to chat with you.
- Selim: Hello, I'm from Egypt. And where are you from?
- Katrina and George: We're from Britain.
- Selim: The number of Muslims in Britain is many times more than the number of Muslims in Italy.
- George: That's right, yet I'd like to learn about Islam from you. Does your Holy Book believe in the Old and New Testament?
- Selim: Although I only know a little about the beliefs in Islam, I'll tell you what I know. Yes, we believe in them, yet - and I apologize for saying this - we consider that they have been corrupted.
- George: So you believe in Moses and Jesus Christ?
- Selim: Yes, we believe that both of them are prophets from God.
- George: Do you believe that Jesus is our Lord?
- Selim: No, we Muslims believe he's an honorable messenger, but not the Lord.
- George: What's your holy book called and how did it reach you?
- Selim: The *holy book* of *Islam* is *called* the Qur'an. It reached us through Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him). What else would you like to know?
- George: We need to learn about Islam and its teachings.
- Selim: I don’t know much about Islam at all, what I know is tourism and trade, but what do you exactly want to know about Islam?
- George: It’s just that we are astonished by the violence and terrorism you have in your religion.
- Selim: Those who commit acts of terrorism in Islam ruin everything in the name of religion.
- George: When you say “in the name of religion”, do you mean that Islam isn’t a religion of terrorism and violence?
- Selim: Exactly! Islam is a religion of peace and not a religion of terrorism, but Muslims are a backward and intolerant people.
- George: I’ll ask again, so is Islam a backward religion or are terrorist Muslims backward people?
- Selim: Islam isn’t a backward religion, but Muslims are a backward people. If you were a Muslim, your wife wouldn’t sit and chat with us like this. Isn’t this backwardness?
- Katrina: Oh no!? Why couldn’t I sit with you?
- Selim: That’s because you’re supposed to be covered and to stay away from men. In fact, I left Egypt to get away from these backward ideas.
- George: Do your family and your country have the same view?
- Selim (Laughing): Ha ha ha! My father, mother and friends always tell me that my beliefs would take one out of the fold of Islam.
- George: But why?
- Selim: Islam is totally different from Christianity. As for Christians, it’s sufficient to pray on Sundays, and not even regularly, to be considered as a Christian, but for us Muslims, those who don’t pray five times a day are considered to have left the fold of Islam. You deny the Torah and Bible, but if any of us talk against the Qur’an, they are considered to have left the fold of Islam.
- George: Is there anyone from your family here in Italy?
- Selim: I have been living alone in Italy for ten years. I refused to go back to my country. My brother, mother and father came to visit me for the first time a week ago, and they will travel back home in three days.
- George: Can I meet them?

- Selim: Yes, of course. But… and I apologize for saying this, they consider you as unbelievers.
- George: But why?
- Selim: You Christians believe in the Trinity, worshipping others with the God, so according to them you are unbelievers.
- George: So what›s the difference?! We consider them to be unbelievers too, because they don›t believe Jesus is God. Let›s meet them.

Katrina was still silent because of the startling news of the priest, and she felt that she couldn›t handle being upset further, so she said:

- Katrina: George, we don't have time now. Don't forget that we have to attend the holy Sunday mass tomorrow.
- George: Don't be silly dear; we have plenty of time, if they do. When can we meet them?
- Selim: Any time you wish as all the time they're either at home or in the restaurant. I expect that they'll be here any minute now, but If you want to meet them any other time, I'll arrange it with them; and again, I warn you that I'm not to be blamed for anything they might say that offends you.

Katrina was upset at George's insistence, and said sharply:

- Katrina: Excuse me! George, I don't understand you, but if you insist on waiting, we'll wait for a few minutes - so that we don't have to return to the restaurant another time.
- George: I'll go upstairs to see Michael and Sally, and then come back again.
- Selim: George, please wait, they are coming. Should I ask them to join us?
- *George: Yes, of course,* and I'll go to see the kids and come back quickly.
- Selim: Okay, fine. I'll invite them then. But you'll face the consequences, as it's per your request . (Selim turned to his parents) Mother, father and Khalid, I'm here. Please join us. Here are some people who want to meet you.
- Khalid: Selim, what do you want?
- Selim: Khalid, these are my friends and they want to become acquainted with you, so please have a seat. (Selim turned to Katrina and Janolka) May I introduce to you my brother, Khalid, and my mother and father... Khalid speaks English, and my mother and father understand it to some extent, but can't speak it. I'll just follow the discussion, if you don't mind, and won't interfere.
- Khalid: Hello, everybody. As you've just been told, I'm Khalid, and I'm an archi-

tect. This is my father, ‘Abdullah, and this is my mother, ‘Aisha.

- Janolka: Hello, I’m Janolka, I’m Italian. I have my own business.
- Katrina: Hi, I’m Katrina, I’m British.
- Khalid: Pleased to meet you.

George came back from the kids. He said hello and shook hands with Khalid and his father, but when he extended his hand to the mother, she just smiled and welcomed him ...

- Khalid: I’m sorry, but my mother doesn’t shake hands with men, but she says welcome to you.
- George: I’m sorry. I didn’t know that.
- Khalid: We became acquainted with each other before your arrival. I’m Khalid, an architect and Selim’s brother. This is my mother, and this is my father.
- George: I’m George. I’m a computer engineer from Britain. How do you find Italy, the land with a tradition, religion and art?
- Khalid: Being an architect, I’ll begin with art. Art in Italy is unique. Italy is a land that has a civilization and it is also a leader in modern discoveries, though there is something that I don’t admire here.
- George: What is it?
- Khalid: I don›t like the idols and how people revere them; this doesn’t comply with what we were brought up with as Muslims - we consider this as paganism and taking partners with the Lord.

George remembered that he, like Muslims, also doesn’t like statues and paganism. The paganism and the statues of Hindu gods and Buddhists came to his mind.

Khalid went on, saying:

- Khalid: This leads me to talk about religion in Italy, the subject you were asking about.
- George: Excuse me, I’m sorry for interrupting you, but what do you mean by “what you were brought up with as Muslims”?
- Khalid: In Islam *we don’t set up partners* with God and we must have the belief that there is only one God, Who has no partners. Also, we mustn’t raise people to the degree and the rank of God, whoever these people may be. Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Do not make my tomb an idol that is worshipped; I’m only a servant of Allah and His Messenger.”

- George: Do you mean that we are unbelievers?
- Khalid: Whosoever believes that the God is the third of three is setting up partners with Allah.

Katrina interfered in the discussion, as if she was letting off steam, and said:

- Katrina: But Selim, even your older brother doesn’t agree with you and believes that this is extremism.
- Khalid: Selim is my older brother and I respect him. Also, I wouldn›t like to disagree with him in public; but, personally, I›m totally convinced with what I have just said.
- George (interrupting): Does this mean that Moses and Jesus are liars?
- Khalid: Allah forbid! We sincerely believe in Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) and we respect and honor them. We also believe that they were messengers from Allah, and we believe in the holy books which were sent down to them. In fact, we believe that most of your beliefs lower their rank.
- George: We lower the rank of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!?
- Khalid: You believe that he was murdered, but we believe that he wasn’t murdered. Even some of you believe that he was an illegitimate child, isn’t that so? Don’t some of you believe that?
- George: Then what do you believe about Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary?
- Khalid: We believe that he is God’s slave and messenger, and that they didn’t kill or crucify him, but it appeared so to them. Also, we believe that he was born to the Virgin Mary (peace be upon her) miraculously, without any father, by the decree of God, just as Adam was created without a mother or a father, and similarly he spoke when he was in the cradle. We also believe that God made him able to perform many miracles; he healed those who were born blind and the leper, and he brought the dead back to life, by Allah’s Leave, and he informed people of what they have just eaten and what they have stored in their houses.
- George: So you have a clear description of Jesus (peace be upon him) and you believe in him and in the Old and the New Testament, isn’t that the case?
- Khalid: Yes, we believe in the Torah and the Bible, and we believe that they were sent down from God.
- George: But according to the Bible, Jesus is the son of God!
- Khalid: We believe that the Bible was sent down from God, but it was later distorted. Don’t some Bibles say that Jesus is His servant, and not His son or a God?

- George: No, we don’t have anything like that.

Janolka raised his long hair with the end of his hand. Then he raised his hand, and said:

- Janolka: Excuse me! I apologize for interrupting you, but we have this belief in the Gospel of Barnabas, which is a Gospel that was written in the fifteenth century by a Catholic monk who had abandoned Christianity. The Gospel was not recognized by the different *Christian denomination*s, because it said that Jesus gave glad tidings of a Messenger that would come after him, and it also states that Jesus is a messenger of God.

George opened his eyes wide in amazement and said:

- George: That’s right!? But why wasn’t it recognized by the Catholic denominations?!
- Janolka: That’s the situation, George, it was not recognized by Catholicism or Protestantism; as otherwise it would have been recognized by other Christian denominations, and many of them would have entered Islam as a result. That’s why they said they doubted it and claimed that it had been written by a Muslim.

Khalid smiled, and said:

- *Khalid: There are signs* proving that Gospel to be the closest to the correct version.
- George: What do you mean by the closest to the correct version? Is there a correct version and a version which is far from being correct?
- Khalid: I mean, the closest to the one that was sent down from the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).
- This was endorsed by one of the ancient manuscripts; the Gospels found in one of the caves of Beni Mazar in Egypt, dating back to the beginning of the third century AD., which was called the Gospel of Judas. It says the same thing. Note that it was before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Janolka said, sarcastically:

- Janolka: You’re totally correct, but most Christians don’t believe either in the Gospel of Barnabas or the Gospel of Judas?

Khalid, while looking at his brother Selim, said:

- Khalid: I apologize if what I said disturbed you, but all that I said is due to my love of Jesus (peace be upon him) and the book sent down to him from God.

Katrina’s emotions became all mixed up, and her eyes filled with tears when

she heard about Khalid's love of Jesus, so she said:

- Katrina: My whole life is full of sacrifices and love for Jesus Christ, and therefore we believe in him and accept him as our savior, so we're called Christians.
- Khalid: I'm not a scholar of religion, I'm only an architect. It seems that you are sincere in your love for Jesus (peace be upon him). Have you read the book called "My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam," written by Simon Alfredo Caraballo, who used to be a Venezuelan Catholic?
- Katrina: No, I've never even heard of that book, and I don't think that my love for Christ will lead me to anything except Catholicism!
- Khalid: So why don't you read it?! You are sure about your Catholicism, aren't you?
- Katrina: I've never come across it, otherwise, I would've read it.
- Khalid: This copy which I have is a gift to you. I don't know why but I feel that you sincerely love Jesus (peace be upon him) unlike others, and I apologize for saying this, but some monks and priests whom you may think to be pious earn their living from their claim that they love Jesus.
- Katrina: Thank you. I'll read it, but I'm sure I won't have a change of heart about Jesus or Catholicism.
- George: You say that you aren't a scholar of religion, yet you're talking like one, and even like a preacher.
- Khalid: Islam requires all of us to *call* people towards this religion, through beautiful *preaching*. Then he smiled, looked at his mother and said: When my mother forced me to come here to Italy, she said: "It would be a good chance to call people to Islam." I don't speak Italian, so this is my first attempt at that.
- George: I'm sorry, but all people like coming to the advanced civilized West, and escaping from the underdeveloped countries, but you say that she forced you to come?!
- Khalid: Europe is more advanced than our countries, this makes immigrants happy because they were able to reach Europe, especially because of the political, religious and economic oppression in our countries, but I work as an engineer in a good company and my income is sufficient. After the fall of the dictatorial regime in Egypt, things are getting better - so let's at least hope it will continue getting better.
- George: But you suffer from religious and political oppression due to the religion,

isn't that so?

- Khalid: It's impossible for Islam to be a reason for oppression.
- George: But the Muslims bombed the Kedeseen Church in Alexandria, didn't they?
- Khalid: This is what was initially said. And the whole world believed this, and so did I, even though I was astonished by it. But after the fall of the dictator Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, who was supported by the West, it was proved that he and his intelligence agency were behind the bombings. I think you heard the first news and not the latter, as usual.
- George: But you're still backward due to your religion!

'Aisha, Khalid's mother, pointed at him and said in Arabic:

- Khalid's mother: O Khalid, tell him that we are backward because we have moved away from our religion!

Khalid translated his mother's words into English, and then lunch was served. George tried to continue with the discussion, so he said:

- George: Does your mother and father understand the discussion that is going on between us?
- Khalid: Yes, they understand it well, though they can't speak English well. Selim told you this at the beginning, perhaps before you came.
- George: May I ask her something?
- Khalid (translating): She says go ahead, and I will translate what she says.
- George: Would you like to become an atheist, a Jew or a Christian?
- Khalid's mother (Khalid's translation): O my son, I seek refuge with God, no one ever likes to be in a state of loss.
- George: Are we in a state of loss?
- Khalid's mother (Khalid's translation): If it isn't a state of loss, then I do not know the meaning of the word 'loss'. I'm happy, honored and treated well in Islam.
- George: Mmmm, is this just your opinion, or the opinion of all Egyptians?
- Khalid's mother (Khalid›s translation): It is at least my view. But unfortunately some of us have been affected by you Westerners, and so see our religion as being backward.
- Then she looked at her son, Selim, who looked down in embarrassment...
- George: But the woman is despised in Islam!
- Khalid's mother (Khalid's translation): Nonsense! O son who told you this?! I'm

sixty five years old and I can force my son, Khalid, to come with me, and he obeys me happily, though I know that he is busy and that he didn't want to come. He visits me, and also my daughters visit me three, four or even five times a week. They give me presents; they can't disobey me or their father. Have you ever seen such generosity? I don't know the meaning of the word 'generosity' if such acts are not considered to be a form of generosity.

- George: Oh! I haven't seen my father or mother for three months.

Khalid's mother answered, but Khalid seemed a little perturbed by her reply. He looked at Selim, who also looked perturbed.

- George: Khalid, please tell me what she said?
- Khalid: Never mind, it's not important …
- George: No, please, go ahead.
- Khalid: She says that we have ones like Selim who have learnt from you and adopted your bad habits.
- George: Most people in our country don't do anything but drink too much alcohol and show bad manners or inappropriate behavior.
- Khalid's mother (Khalid's translation): Everywhere people lose their way and become lost, yet whenever they find the way again, they repent and return to their Lord.

Michael and Sally came from the terrace after they had had their lunch, and said:

- Michael and Sally: Dad, you said that you would return in 20 minutes, and we have been waiting for 45 minutes now. Are we going to go now as you promised, please?
- Khalid: I apologize; we have taken up your time.
- George: Wow! The time has passed by so quickly!
- George: Thank you, Selim, Khalid, Mrs. ‹Aisha and Mr. ‹Abdullah, and I'm sorry for taking up so much of your time. Here›s my card, could I have yours?
- Khalid: My mother and father don't have any cards, but here is mine. My e-mail account is written on it. I hope you'll give me your opinion about the book, Katrina.
- Katrina: I'll try, thank you Khalid.

After Khalid had left with his father and mother, Selim apologized to his guests and said:

- Selim: I kept silent, as I told you I would, and I apologize for any discomfort their comments may have caused; I told you and warned you from the beginning, but you insisted.
- George: Though I'm surprised at what they said, and their strict opinions, they all talked very politely. Ha ha ha! So please don't apologize to me, go instead to your mother and apologize for not visiting her for years.

Janolka said goodbye to everyone then he left to go to his work. George and Katrina went to Trevi Fountain with the children ... It was a wonderful fountain. They were happy to see it, as it was so beautiful, so they spent the rest of the day there. Before they left, Katrina threw a coin into the fountain. So Sally looked at her in surprise...

- Katrina: Italian legend says that if visitors *throw a coin* into the *fountain*, they are sure to return to Rome.
- Sally: Dad, please give me a coin to throw.
- George: My little darling, don't believe such superstitions.
- Sally: Dad, I know, but I want to throw a coin, so I can say that I threw a coin into Trevi fountain.
- George: Ok, darling. This coin is for you, and another one for Michael. Katrina, I hope you aren't superstitious.

Katrina replied, with a strict tone:

- Katrina: And I hope you aren't complicated! Take it easy, this is just a picnic.

(3)

- George: Katrina, what's up?
- Katrina: Nothing, I'm fine.
- George: Don't you like the fountain or the area around it? You're not laughing or talking much today, it's unlike you.
- Katrina: No, it's wonderful. I'm just a little distracted, that's all.
- George: So what is it then that has made you so distracted?
- Katrina: Why did you want to meet those Muslims?
- George: To get to know if the old wives tales about them and their backwardness is true, and to be ready to give an answer to Tom when he asks me about them.
- Katrina: But you looked so interested in what they were saying.

George smiled and looked into Katrina's eyes, and said:

- George: Did I, really?!

Katrina understood what he meant and said:

- Katrina: But they deny our love for Jesus.
- George: No, it seems that they really love Jesus and his mother, Mary.
- Katrina: No, I disagree! What are you saying?
- George: The difference lies in the view of Jesus being divine, since they believe that this is polytheism, infidelity and paganism.
- Katrina: But we believe that it's monotheism and a form of worship.
- George (Laughing): Ha ha ha! Tell me, are you going to read that book?
- Katrina: No, I don't want to.
- George (Laughing): But you promised him that you would. Are you afraid of reading it, like he said?!
- Katrina: It's all nonsense, if you ask me! George, this book can't do anything.
- George: You're right … so why don't you read it? What's the harm then?
- Katrina: There's no harm.
- George: For the first time I see that you are unable to defend Catholicism. It is the first time I have heard such simple words shake you so much.
- Katrina: I just don't want to read the book, okay?
- George: This proves that you're afraid of the affect it might have on you.
- Katrina: Fine, I'll read it just for you then.
- George: Katrina, my love, what's wrong with you? Why are you acting so strange and unsure all of a sudden?!
- Katrina: I really don't know. From the time we met the priest I've felt troubled. Perhaps I'm truly afraid of reading the book.
- George: Katrina, you aren't afraid, you're strong; you're even my role model with regards to your certain faith. I suggest that you read the book now because it's very small, and I'll check my email messages because I didn't check them yesterday.

While Katrina was reading the book George checked his email, but his eyes kept watching Katrina and her enthusiasm while she was reading. He found replies from those he had sent messages and quotes from the Torah. They had sent him their comments, which he then summed up and sent back to them.

"Tom: Do you mean that this is the reason why Brad became such a monster?! It appears that this is a fair description of him."

“Levvi: Although you know my opinion of this savagery - all of you believe in it. As whosoever attacks theTorah, attacks all heavenly religions.”

- “Habib: I completely agree with him, but have noticed that Muslims, though I don’t like them, differ from him with regards to their belief in the Torah.”

“Adam: This seems to be very bad words; can it really be from the Lord?”

Then he sent them the following message in reply:

“Today I’m expecting your comments on an idea which I have not quoted from any text.

That the Christian Trinity is a form of polytheism and a vague concept, and that God is One and Jesus is His slave and messenger. I’m waiting for your reply and your brief comments,

George”

George finished his work on the computer and turned to Katrina, who was still absorbed in the book . .

- George: My darling, have you finished?
- Katrina: Please, wait a little longer.
- George: Honey, you can finish reading the book tomorrow. I want to discuss some urgent things with you.
- Katrina: Please, just a few minutes and I’ll be finished.
- George: You seem such an enthusiastic reader!
- Katrina: George, please, just a few minutes.
- George: I’ll sleep, then.

Katrina finished the book, then she drew near to George who was lying on the bed, and said:

- Katrina: I apologize. I was near the end of the book and I just wanted to finish it.
- George: It seems to be quite a convincing book then!
- Katrina: To a certain extent, the story isn’t too bad.
- George: I’d like to know our plans for tomorrow.
- Katrina: Tomorrow is Sunday; the priest asked us to attend the mass, didn’t he?
- George: Yes, he asked us to attend, but are we going to go?
- Katrina: Sure, are we going to leave a mass in the holiest church?
- George (laughing): Ha ha ha! So your love of Jesus led you to the church and not to Islam?!

- Katrina: Although the book is convincing to a great extent, I'll go to pray in the church tomorrow.
- George: But where will we leave the kids?
- Katrina: They can come with us to the mass.
- George: Aren't you afraid of the priests?
- Katrina: What do you mean?
- George: I can't take my kids to the mass. I'm afraid of the priests there.
- Katrina: Afraid of what?
- George: Their barbaric behavior because they have read the Old and the New Testament repeatedly.
- Katrina: You're not making sense today. Is it possible to explain to me what you mean?
- George: Haven't you read about the sex scandals of the churches? Haven't you read about the cases brought by the juveniles against the church? I can't forget the meeting with the one who was raped in the church. The monks and priests were like monsters, not humans. I don't want Michael and Sally to see any of this.
- Katrina: George, what's wrong with you? I go to the church more than once a week and nothing has happened to me. Why do you have such insinuations?
- George: Have you ever seen, discussed, or read about the moral scandals of the church?
- Katrina: No, never.
- George: Okay, let's agree that you go on YouTube and watch videos about this matter, and if you still insist on taking the kids to the mass with us, we'll take them.
- Katrina: I'll only watch them for your sake, and we'll all go to the church tomorrow. I can see that you're starting to talk the same way as that Muslim we met.
- George (laughing): Ha ha ha! And it seems that you've also been influenced by his speech. I'm sure you'll be affected by the videos that you'll watch, so good night, my sweetheart.
- Katrina: Good night, my love.

They hugged each other for a long time, then George slept, but Katrina stayed up watching the videos and reading about the sex scandals of the church, and she moved to the other types of scandals too. She was oblivious to how the time had passed so swiftly. She returned to the book "My Great Love for Je-

sus Led Me to Islam", and started to re-read a passage from the book without knowing why she chose that particular one:

"Besides being contradictory to mind and logic, the doctrine of redemption and crucifixion also opens the door to abandoning good deeds and committing evil deeds and sins, like murder, robbery, rape, adultery and so on. Saint Paul underestimated the importance of the law, commandments and the good deeds which the Christ came to fulfill and call others to. Paul said in his message to the Romans (3:28) 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' And even Adam, peace be upon him, his good deeds didn't help him (4:3), so he came to confine salvation and deliverance just to having faith in the crucifixion of the Christ, peace be upon him. So if you think in this way, don't ask about the poor state of humanity. And a reply to Paul can be found in what came on the tongue of Jesus, in Matthew (5:19) 'Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'"

She re-read the passage several times ... Then she realized that it was very late, so she put the book down beside her. She then tumbled into bed and kept thinking until she eventually fell asleep.

George woke up early the next morning, but Katrina was still in a deep sleep. He got out of bed, bathed and dressed himself. When he went closer to Katrina to wake her up, he found the book beside her, opened on the page where she had stopped reading the day before. He read it and then put it turned over on the same page he had found it.

George went to the kids' room and woke Michael and Sally up to get ready for the day ahead. Then he returned back to Katrina and woke her up to get ready. While they were on their way to have breakfast in the buffet of the hotel, Katrina turned to George and asked:

- Katrina: Where are we touring today?
- George: The most beautiful and best places.
- The kids: Mum, where are we going today? We've asked Dad, but he said that it's up to you. So please tell us where we're going?
- Katrina: It's a surprise! We'll tell you soon.

Katrina asked the kids to go ahead of them to the buffet as she wanted to

have a little talk with George.

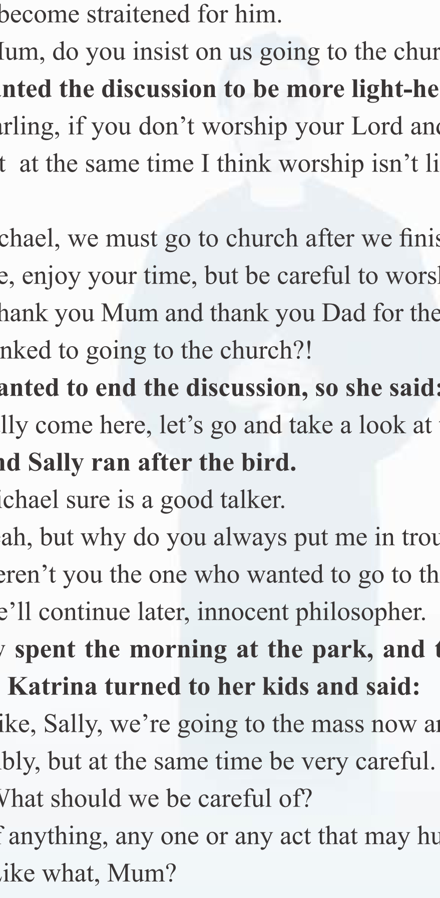
- Katrina: George, where are we going today?
- George: Did you watch the videos or read about the sex scandals in the church last night?
- Katrina: Although I have spent a lot of time at the church, what I saw and read was beyond my imagination. If it is true, then they are monsters, not human beings.
- George: Do you think that’s because of Paul’s instructions that separates faith from good deeds, and that’s why Christianity invented the doctrine of redemption and salvation?
- Katrina: Did you read the book?
- George: No, I read only a passage on the page where the book was open. Is there a problem if I read it?
- Katrina: No, darling. I was just surprised. Even if you do read it, it would be okay; I’m not afraid. Perhaps this passage, in particular, poses a problem for me. Anyway, we can think about it later. Now, where are we going?
- Katrina: We must attend the mass in the church.
- George: Okay, but first, we should go to Villa Doria Pamphili Park for a short while. It is the largest park in Rome and even one of the most beautiful ones.
- Katrina: But then we’ll be late for the mass.
- George: Ha ha ha! Don’t worry, nun. We won’t be late.
- Katrina: Okay, let’s go to the park then.

(4)

The area of Villa Doria Pamphili Park was about nine square kilometers. It had a large green space that brought joy and comfort to all its visitors, and was indigenous to various species of birds. Michael and Sally thoroughly enjoyed watching the birds, and Michael remarked:

- Michael: What a wonderful choice, Mum! This visit is one of the best visits on our holiday so far.
- Katrina: It’s a wonderful and beautiful place. Do you like it, Sally?
- Sally: Yes mom, I like it a lot.
- Katrina: Do you know what would make the day even more beautiful and complete? If we went to the mass at church today.

Michael clamored and said:



- Michael: Please, I don’t want to go to church today.

George shrugged his shoulders, looked at Katrina and said:

- George: It’s up to your Mum, Michael, so ask her.
- Katrina: Darling, after taking this spectacular sightseeing tour, we should take a religious and spiritual tour and thank Jesus for giving us this amazing opportunity.
- Michael: Sorry Mum, but I don’t want to go to the church, I don’t like it!
- Katrina: You don’t like to worship and thank Jesus, who created you then provided food for you and is merciful to you?!
- Michael: I like to worship my Lord, but without going to church.
- Katrina: Unless man directs himself to God, worships Him and thanks Him, the world will become straitened for him.
- Michael: Mum, do you insist on us going to the church?

George wanted the discussion to be more light-hearted, so he said:

- George: Darling, if you don’t worship your Lord and thank Him, you’ll feel distressed. But at the same time I think worship isn’t linked or confined to going to church.
- Karina: Michael, we must go to church after we finish our tour of this wonderful park. Please, enjoy your time, but be careful to worship God and thank Him.
- Michael: Thank you Mum and thank you Dad for the lovely trip. But why is worship only linked to going to the church?!

Katrina wanted to end the discussion, so she said:

- Katrina: Sally come here, let’s go and take a look at that bird over there.

Michael and Sally ran after the bird.

- George: Michael sure is a good talker.
- Katrina: Yeah, but why do you always put me in trouble with the kids?
- George: Weren’t you the one who wanted to go to the mass?
- Katrina: We’ll continue later, innocent philosopher.

The family spent the morning at the park, and then they had lunch. After they finished, Katrina turned to her kids and said:

- Katrina: Mike, Sally, we’re going to the mass now and I want you to perform the prayer humbly, but at the same time be very careful.
- The kids: What should we be careful of?
- Katrina: Of anything, any one or any act that may hurt or bother you.
- The kids: Like what, Mum?

- Katrina: Anything that might harm you. Is it clear, Sally and Michael?!
- Michael: Yes Mum, crystal clear, but I don't know why you are warning us like this. Are we going to the church or to the park for beasts and predators?!

Once they approached the church, Katrina went closer to George and whispered in his ear ..

- Katrina: You've made me worried. Please, you watch over Michael and I'll watch over Sally.
- George: Darling, not to that extent! It seems that you're really over reacting. But okay, I'll check him.

They all entered the church; the holy mass had already begun. Unlike George who was uninterested in it, Katrina was impressed, but worried and stressed.

Once it had finished and they had left, Michael embraced his mother and said.

- Michael: Thank you, Mum. It was a wonderful mass. How much I love Jesus!
- Katrina: Jesus died for our salvation, and even for the salvation of all of mankind, from sin.

Sally innocently asked her Mum:

- Sally: Mum, isn't it possible for the Merciful God to save us from our sins without Jesus being killed?! The death of Jesus the son of God has caused me much pain, as I love Jesus and it is because of him that I receive gifts on Christmas day.

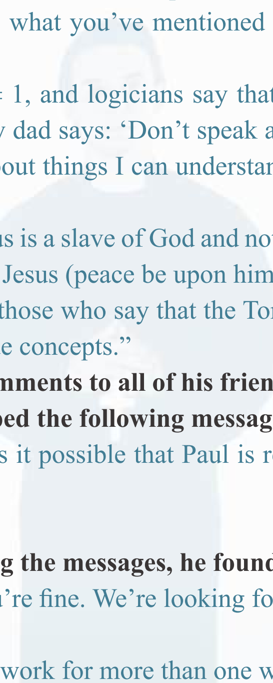
Michael said:

- Michael: Me too, Sally. Perhaps this is the reason I don't like going to the church, or maybe because I don't like priests and monks.
- Katrina: Your love of Jesus will save and redeem you.
- George: Michael, don't forget to work as faith alone is not enough, according to what Jesus taught us.

The family made their way back to the hotel and once the kids entered their room, George said to Katrina with a sly smile:

- George: You were nervous in the church!
- Katrina: And you were obviously uninterested!
- George: Yeah, how can I be interested in something I'm not convinced of? What's important is that we're travelling the day after tomorrow and I'd like to enjoy what time is left, like we enjoyed the past few days.

- Katrina: I’m so tired; I went to bed very late last night, so I think I’ll go to sleep now.
- George: Okay dear. I’ll check my email first, then head to bed. Could you lend me the book that Muslim gave you?
- Katrina: Do you want to read it?!
- George: Maybe; what harm will happen if I do?
- Katrina: Nothing, here you are. Good night.



George got out his computer and checked his email to find his friends’ comments on his message:

“Habib: I did my best to make my students in the university understand how the trinity is monotheistic, but I couldn’t. Perhaps it’s because I, myself, don’t understand it. Generally speaking, what you’ve mentioned is found in the very old versions of the Bible.”

“Tom: Math says that 3 ≠ 1, and logicians say that any portion of the whole is subordinate to the whole. My dad says: ‘Don’t speak about things you don’t understand,’ and I say: ‘Tell me about things I can understand so I will be able to answer you, ha ha ha!’”

“Adam: If we say that Jesus is a slave of God and not a partner or son, this doesn’t mean that we are demeaning Jesus (peace be upon him).”

“Levvi: This is similar to those who say that the Torah states that Ezra is the son of God. I think both are vague concepts.”

George sent all of the comments to all of his friends without mentioning who they were from, then he typed the following message:

“Third discussion point: Is it possible that Paul is responsible for the corruption of the NewTestament?

- George”

And while he was reading the messages, he found a message from Kach:

“Dear George.. I hope you’re fine. We’re looking forward to seeing you soon, Kach”

*Note: You have been off work for more than one week.

He was about to turn off his computer when he remembered Adam’s Facebook page and that he hadn’t checked it in a while, so he browsed it and found that Adam had written a new post about him: “Lessons of My Friend Searching for Happiness 3”

“My friend, who’s searching for happiness, faced a strange health problem recently. So before sharing what I’ve learned from him, I’d first like to share what happened during his illness:

1- Disease is usually accompanied by a period of weakness and this indeed was the case with my friend, and I feared that this would deter him from continuing his search, but his sincerity and determination made him continue. The moral here is that a wise person shouldn't take any fateful decision during any period of weakness.

2- There was a time when I almost told him what the path to happiness was, when I saw how weak he was, but God saved me from doing this.

3- I'm sure that the coming period for my friend will be the most difficult period, so I'll tell you any news as soon as I hear anything.

Let's talk again about the lessons. My friend is still determined to find the path to happiness, and I've learned the following lessons from him:

1- People who surround you are either influenced by you or influence you, othrewise you have to struggle with them. This is established by both the intellectual conflicts and the conflicts of belief. Many people have begun to be influenced by my friend, and this shows just how strong his determination and sincerity is. Generally speaking, I think there is more than one person who is searching for happiness. Perhaps I'll give you the good news soon that they all reached the path to happiness.

2- Having a psychological balance and avoiding dealing complicatedly with any ideas are of the utmost importance on the quest for happiness. And my friend has such characteristics, though he sometimes loses them under pressure.

3- The importance of learning: one must not be afraid to relearn the things that one thinks one knows but which may not be right. I admire my friend's insistence on learning things that he has known since his childhood, yet with an open mind.

4- My friend, unfortunately, has a limited ability to link between accidents, and what he reads and discusses, which is a very important ability that we need when we compare between ideas to reach happiness.

I think my friend is taking his final steps towards happiness and towards answering the major questions about life. I'll keep you informed in the lessons to come,

Adam"

George read the readers' comments**, and his attention was drawn to** a reader**'s** comment in which he said**: "You seem to** love your friend so much**; so you portray him** as a role model**."** Adam**'s** reply was**:** "Yes, I wish him **all the best,** as I wish **for** all people**;** God commands us to wish good for **the** people."

Then he read another post from Adam, talking about ideological transformations. It was written as follows:

"Despite the difficulty of ideological transformations, I had a strange experience today; I sat down with a smart psychiatrist, and a genius philosopher too, but he always seemed to change his belief and ideas; he was a Christian then an apostate. He also became a bad mannered and an irreligious person. He has studied Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity, and now he wants to study Islam, yet he has two problems: First, he believes that philosophy rules everything, yet I told him that science rules everything, not modern principles of philosophy, but he wasn't convinced, though he told me he would have second thoughts about it. Second, he is thinking of each religion with a mind filled with hatred towards all religions, and this is due to him being an atheist and his deep knowledge of the corruption of the religions he has studied. So please, could you give me some advice? How should I deal with him?

Adam"

George knew that Adam was talking about Tom, so he browsed over Tom's page, but couldn't find any new posts. And what was strange was that Tom hadn't logged onto his page for five days, which was unlike him. George turned off the computer and held the book to read over its pages quickly as he felt sleepy. Suddenly a passage grabbed his attention; he read it carefully without knowing why he was so taken aback by it, though it was just ordinary material. Could it be because he missed it in Christianity?! As in Christianity there was almost a complete separation between worship and asking for salvation, and everyday life, or was it only because it was said by a Christian?

"After putting the Prophet Muhammad at the top of his list in his book, the American writer, Michael Hart, said: 'Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels. It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.' "

George went to bed but kept thinking until he eventually fell asleep. He remained in a deep sleep until the morning when Katrina woke him up, saying:

- Katrina: George, honey, wake up! Wake up! Ha ha ha! This is because of the book.
- George: Oh ... you seem to be worried. Be at ease, darling, I didn't read all the book.
- Katrina: Ha ha ha! All this and you didn't even read it all, so what if you had read it all! Come on, get up!

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- Katrina: You should hurry, since we don't have much time. Today is our last day in Rome and we still have many sites to see.

It was a busy day; the family visited gardens and parks, they boarded boats in the artificial lake, and ended their tour by going shopping. While they were leaving the market, George prodded Katrina gently, and with a meaningful smile, said:

- George: You haven't bought the cross yet. Did you stop loving Jesus?
- Katrina: No, never! I have increased nothing but my love for him. However, one shows love by being obedient and through good deeds, not by only having crosses.
- George: That's what I've been trying to say to you for a long time, that love isn't measured by crosses, statues, monks or priests.
- Katrina: Let the matter drop, O biased protestant.
- George: Or perhaps my love of Christ will make me a terrorist Muslim, even though I haven't read the book.
- Katrina: I think you are fit to be a terrorist or a Hindu who worships cows.
- George: Ha ha ha! Very funny!

When evening time came, the family went to dine at a luxurious restaurant overlooking the River Alteverh. They had dinner at a seat with a spectacular view and enjoyed the fresh and cool air.

- Michael: Excuse me, I heard you talking about religion. Is religion really important for people?
- Katrina: Of course, darling.
- Michael: A friend at school says that Atheism is the basic order of affairs; that nature created us and that the idea of religion is a form of wretched ancient mythology.
- Katrina: But what do you think?
- Michael: I think that there are some things in religion that are just fables.
- Katrina: There is a big difference between considering the idea of religion as a fable, and in some religions being fables.
- Michael: But there are a lot of fables in religion, as my friend said.
- Katrina: Like what, baby?
- Michael: Though my teacher explained the belief in the trinity, redemption, etc., more than once, I couldn't understand it.
- Katrina: Perhaps because you're young, you'll understand it when you are older.

- Michael: My atheist friend says, “Those whom you ask say that you don’t understand because you’re still young, but believe me, they all don’t understand these matters.” Do you understand them, Mum?!
- Katrina: Yeah, to some extent.
- Michael: And you, Dad.
- George: Ha ha ha! No, no to some extent.
- Michael: Oh no! It’s a tricky question. Does the Lord want us to get tired before even knowing Him?

Katrina was annoyed and said:

- Katrina: Come on, now - you’re making it hard like your Dad. It’s as easy as A B C, darling.

George decisively added:

- George: Hey Michael, that’s great. It’s impossible that the Lord would send down something we can’t understand. And if that’s what you think, it means that you must learn more to understand. But don’t accept any view that says that these things are mysteries that we have to accept.
- Michael: Dad, do you agree with my atheist friend then?
- George: Absolutely not! Atheism is nothing but a myth which is totally contrary to reason.
- Michael: Sorry, Dad, I don’t understand. Could you explain it to me?
- George: Is it possible that the world came to be through coincidence?! Can mankind be created by chance?!
- Michael: Atheists don’t say that, Dad, as some of them talk about Darwin’s theory which we studied in biology.
- George: Yeah, Darwin’s theory is one of the ancient historical theories, but now it’s been proved to be false, both theoretically and practically.
- Michael: But how?

George: You should ask your science teacher. He has more knowledge about that than me; I can buy you a detailed book about it if you like. We should rely on knowledge and not on myths, even if they seem to be scientific.

- Michael: But the problem is that religious beliefs are contrary to science.
- George: Impossible, none of them can do without the other.
- Michael: How?
- George: I can summarize it with Einstein’s proverb “science without *religion* is lame, and *religion without science* is blind.”
- Michael: Do you mean that the science of the atheists is lame?!

- George: Their ignorance is greater than their knowledge, and even what they do know is lame and does not support anything. Similarly, religion without science may become legends and just mysteries, and that's why it's considered to be blind in such a case…

Michael was silent, meanwhile George pondered whether his questions, which seem to be older than his age, were evidence that Michael was clever or that he had some type of doubts.

When the family returned to the hotel, Janolka was waiting for them in the reception. Once he saw them, he stood to greet them and said:

- Janolka: A surprise visit! Hi.
- Katrina: Look who's here! The priest's friend. We didn't see you in the mass!
- Janolka: I haven't attended mass in almost a year.
- Katrina: And you and the priest are friends, how?
- Janolka: It seems that you see the priest as a very holy figure, though he couldn't answer George's questions and evaded them. He explained to me what happened.

George was amazed and said:

- George: You didn't believe me?!
- Janolka: No, I didn't mean that. It was just that the priest acted strangely. You're right; it seems that the priest just didn't want Katrina to leave alone.

Katrina opened her eyes with astonishment and said:

- Katrina: But why me?!
- Janolka: I told you that he differentiates between talking to the public like you who follow and benefit from his sermons, and talking to his friends in private. Anyway, I don't want to take up too much of your time; I think you're travelling tomorrow.
- George: Yes, we're travelling tomorrow.
- Janolka: I came to say good-bye. Please, keep in touch. It was so nice meeting and talking to you.
- George: Likewise, the pleasure was all ours, thank-you.
- Janolka: Please, could you lend me that book? I asked my friend for a copy, but he said it was the last one he had.
- George: Is the book so important to you?!
- Janolka: Our meeting that day proved to myself that I don't know anything about Islam except some general ideas and media reports, that's why I decided to learn about Islam. The title of the book attracted me actually, so I'd like to read it.
- Katrina: I'll go upstairs with the kids and get the book for you. Let's go Michael,

Sally.

George said, smiling:

- George: Ha ha ha! You have decided to study Islam, then.
- Janolka: Yes.
- George: Will you become a Muslim?
- Janolka: Come on! Do you expect me to be like the former president of Libya, Al- Gaddafi? I will study all ideas without discriminating between any of them. I realized that I didn’t know enough about Islam in that meeting, and although I have a lot of information about Islam, it’s all just hearsay.
- George: I haven’t read about Islam yet. I’ll read about it soon. Unfortunately, I haven’t had the chance to read the book yet. I wish I could read it too.

Katrina came with the book. She gave it to Janolka, who took out a piece of paper and a pencil and took down some information about it. Then he gratefully gave it back and said:

- Janolka: Here you are. Sorry, I changed my mind.
- George: Don’t you want the book?
- Janolka: No thanks, I wrote down the title of the website of the book and that’s enough for me. Goodbye and keep in touch.

George and Katrina went upstairs to their room. George turned on the computer because he was expecting his friends’ answers to his question: “Was Paul responsible for the corruption of the Torah or not?” Much to his surprise, all the replies said that the Torah had been corrupted, but the ways they said it had been corrupted were different. He typed up all the answers and resent them to all of his friends.

“Habib: Historically and unfortunately, yes.”

“Tom: If it is corrupted, I don’t care who actually corrupted it.”

“Adam: What a difficult question! I don’t know who corrupted it.”

“Levvi: So who corrupted the Old Testament then?! Perhaps the problem happened due to the delay in writing the bible, and not that anyone actually meant to corrupt it.”

Then he replied to them:

Fourth discussion point: “Tell me truthfully, do you wish to learn about Islam? And if so, why?”

“I’d like a short answer, please, as tomorrow evening I’ll be back in London, George in Rome”

He sent the message to all his friends and added Katrina and Janolka this

time, and then he checked his email messages to find a message from Tom:

"To all my friends, I must inform you that my Facebook page has been hacked, and I had to negotiate with Facebook administration to log me back into my account, so anything shameful that may have appeared on my page doesn't express my opinions,

Tom"

George browsed Tom's page and he found photos which showed Tom engaged in acts of intimacy with a lot of women. George said to himself, ''Has the battle between Tom and Brad begun?" Then he remembered Adam's article on the intellectual fluctuations of the doctor and said, ''Adam was right; I think Tom was at rock bottom." George continued to look at the photos. After a short while he realized that he was looking at these photos to see if Katrina was there. Then he felt that his doubt was misplaced and that such behavior didn't suit him or her, so he turned off the computer. He went to Katrina, who was lying on the bed, and kissed her. She felt his kiss, so she kissed him and then opened her eyes and said, smiling:

- Katrina: I love you.
- George: I love you, too. Come closer.

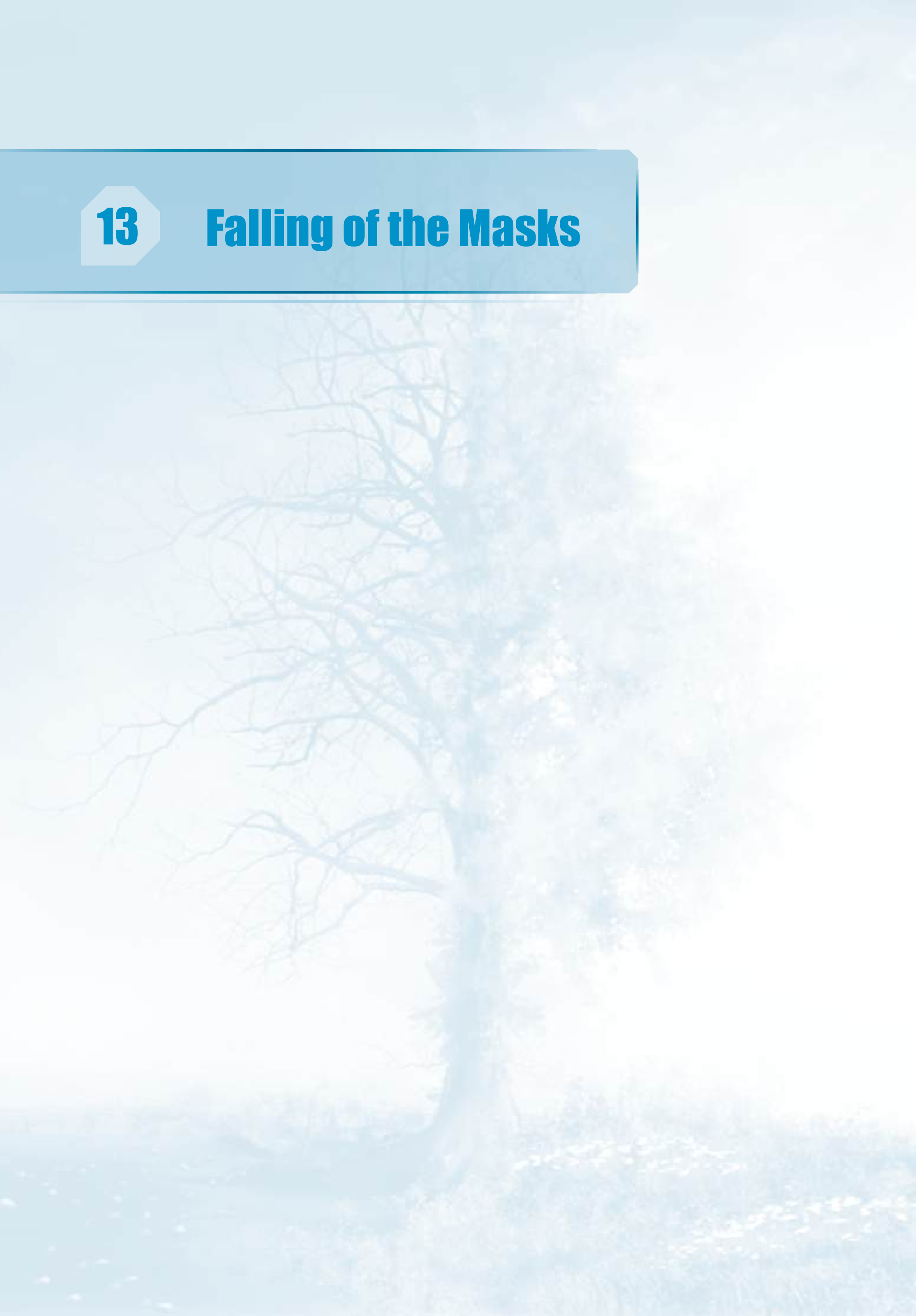
The following day passed very quickly as they had only a few hours left before going to the airport. They went to the market where Katrina reminded George about Adam's present, the very luxurious, but cheap leather bag. While searching for the shop they came across one that had a clearance sale on some leather bags, and was even offering a discount of up to 80 % on some pieces. So he managed to buy Adam a luxurious, but cheap bag. They went out of the shop laughing at the strange order and how they, by chance, were able to find it.

After they had eaten lunch at a restaurant near the market, they returned to the hotel to pack their luggage and make their way to the airport.

Falling of the Masks

13

Falling of the Masks



Falling of the Masks

(1)

After returning from his trip to Rome, George felt more alive and at ease, and was relieved of a lot of his pressure and concerns. He wondered if the concerns he used to feel was due to him being occupied with reading, or may be due to the confusion and negative thoughts about the Bible and God; rather about Christianity as a whole, with all its sects. But what he felt now could be compared to the joy of a child when his toy breaks, as what would he find after shattering the church, the papacy and their Bible? Where will he find another toy to play with?! Or will he just remain as an atheist; losing his soul, his life and his happiness? But then he shouted in a way that shook his soul: "O God! O God!"

Even Katrina loved the journey and felt that her spirit had changed and had been lifted. Was it the happiness for her husband and her kids' pleasure?! Or was it the happiness that revealed the masks she used to see and admire? She now had a new and different perspective of life. She remembered her shock about the priest's confusion and weakness. She also remembered how weak she was before the Egyptian and his book, and her silence before Janolka and his arguments. She said to herself, "But to have certainty is better than having horrendous doubts," and continuing she asked herself, "Why am I happier now?"

After returning home, unpacking and settling down, George opened his e-mail to check if he had any replies from his friends, and he found some. He copied them and then sent them back, as he had done the other times.

"Levvi: Yes, though I hate Muslims who killed my father, but to know the evil that lies within them and how to keep away from it."

"Habib: Yes, it is a divine religion, and yet we know very little about it."

"Tom: Yes, perhaps I might find there what I couldn't find in any other religion."

"Adam: Definitely, yes. Being objective requires one to search and know all divine religions."

"Janolka: Yes, I like to learn and know about everything."

Among all these replies, he couldn't find Katrina's, as she hadn't checked her e-mail since they had traveled to Rome. So George wrote the fifth point for discussion and sent it to all of them.

"Fifth discussion point: I was surprised that all the replies I got from you stated "yes", though for different reasons. Therefore today's question is: I'd like everyone to briefly compare the books of the three divine religions: the Old Testament, New Testament and the Qur'an,

George –London

Some minutes passed after sending the e-mail, and then the phone rang. It was Tom, but his tension and worry were clear in his voice.

- George: What's wrong?
- Tom: Nothing, I just want to check you arrived and set an appointment with you, so when shall we meet?
- George: We only arrived forty-five minutes ago, and it's late. Shall we make it tomorrow? Or you can come now.
- Tom: Sorry, I lost track of time. Please accept my apologies; I'll come to your place at ten a.m. tomorrow morning.
- George: I'll wait for you. Everything will be okay, God willing.
- Tom: Thank you, George. I repeat my apologies.

George became concerned about Tom's call. At once he remembered Tom's e-mail and his Facebook hacking, and his problem with Brad. He restarted his computer and opened Tom's page on Facebook. To his surprise, he found photos of Katrina in outrageous clothes with Tom! He tried to look carefully at them. He found crystal clear innocence on her face in the photos. It was a great shock for him; a shock that erased his happiness and pleasure from his trip to Rome. He said to himself:

- "It seems that everything is deception and falsity, even innocence!"

He thought of calling Tom again, but he preferred to wait until the next day at ten. He tried to sleep, but he couldn't; Katrina's photo with Tom never left his head. He didn't know how he believed the lie weaved by both Katrina and Tom. He thought to himself: "Shame on them! Shame on the high morals the people tell others to have but they themselves do not have. Why doesn't time pass quickly?! Even time is clever at pretending and being false; sometimes time seems long, and other times short, though it is the same time period in both cases."

Katrina woke up at nine in the morning. George pretended to be sleeping. She came closer to him and whispered:

- Katrina: Darling, excuse me, I'm going shopping to get some things for the house.

Once Katrina left, George got out of the bed, waiting for Tom who came at ten on the dot. George received him with a long gloomy face.

- Tom: Sorry for the disturbance. The problem is very simple but very worrying.
- George: Just say it.
- Tom: The battle with Brad has started ferociously.
- George: Didn't you expect that?
- Tom: Yes, but it's a dirty war.
- George: But it's what is to be expected from someone like Brad, isn't it?
- Tom: Yes, but let me continue… he offered for me to help them in scandals or be part of their drug-dealing gang, but I refused. He threatened me more than once, but I kept my stand. A couple of days ago, to my surprise, I found out that my Facebook account couldn't be opened. I thought it was some technical fault in the website. Afterwards, I was shocked to find some of my old unethical photos on my Facebook account.
- George: That's 100% expected, isn't it?
- Tom: Please let me continue. After these photos were posted on my account, he asked me again to cooperate, and I refused once more. After that he started even dirtier business than before, he fabricated unreal photos of me and downloaded them on the website.
- George: So what do you want from me?
- Tom: I don't know what to say, but he created photos of Katrina while we were in the church, and I was naked.
- George: You want to say that the photos of infidelity on your Facebook are fabricated?
- Tom: Yes, they are really fabricated!
- George: I believe the photo you are talking about is one of my wife, and I'm pretty sure that they are actual photos of her.
- Tom: Yes, they are her photos, but they are fake… not real.
- George: That's enough, Tom. Stop fooling me!
- Tom: Have a close look at the photos. You'll see that they were fabricated.
- George: Get out of my house. Get out! Get out!
- Tom: Be fair and do not oppress me or Katrina, George.
- George: Get out! Out I say!

George threw himself into a chair in the hall. He didn't know what to do, he was very anxious. His phone rang so he looked at the number. It was Adam. He mumbled, "It seems that everyone is taking me for a fool and I'm the only idiot in this game. What does he want now?"

- George: Hello! Yes, Adam.
- Adam: Hi! We missed you.
- George: What do you want?
- Adam: Nothing, just wanted to say hello.
- George: Thanks, goodbye.

George hung up the phone, thinking of what he was going to say to Katrina who was expected to arrive in a few minutes. He felt insulted, cheated and as though he had been stabbed in the back. He held himself back a bit when he saw Katrina coming in, smiling.

- Katrina: There is no ready-made breakfast in the hotel like there was in Rome. Have you had breakfast yet, or shall I prepare something for you?
- George: I don't want anything.
- Katrina: So do you want a glass of milk or a cup of tea?
- George: No, thanks.
- Katrina: Join me in something, even just something small.
- George: I told you I don't want anything. Don't you understand?
- Katrina: What's wrong with you, George?
- George: The masks have fallen, Katrina.
- Katrina: What masks?

He opened Tom's page for her, and then went snarling and angrily to the bedroom.

- George: Look, pious worshiper. You, little monster! If you were a nun, you would be a big monster just like the priests and monks of the church, look!

Katrina looked at the photos, and ran crying to George.

- Katrina: Tom is a cheeky liar. This is not me!
- George: Does the professional actress want to resume the play? Well.. go and enjoy yourselves together tomorrow…
- Katrina: Believe me, it's not me! I can't do something like that. This is offensive and a big lie from Tom. Didn't you often tell me that he is an unethical godless man?

- George: Weren't you the one who pushed me to go to him in particular? Weren't you the one who taught him religion? Weren't you the one who said that he had changed?
- Katrina: I didn't ever expect you to suspect me!

Katrina fell down crying bitterly... then she pulled herself together and went to the laptop again. She looked at the photos; cursing and swearing at Tom. Suddenly her eyes caught a clear fabrication. She held the laptop and rushed into George.

- Katrina: Look! The photo is obviously fabricated. It's obviously made up. Does this chest look like it fits this head?!
- George: The exact same words as Tom; 'a fabricated photo'. Is it a new scene in the play?
- Katrina: Look carefully.
- George: Maybe, but I don't want to be an idiot anymore and believe your games with me!
- Katrina: How come Tom said it's fabricated and he's the one who posted it on his page?
- George: A little while ago Tom came and said that Brad had hacked his account, and that he is the one who fabricated this photo out of revenge.
- Katrina: Brad! Why would he want to take revenge on him?
- George: To complete the scenario of the play, he refused to cooperate with him in dealing with drugs.
- Katrina: I don't understand anything, but I'm pretty sure that the photos are fabricated. It's crystal clear!
- George: They could be fabricated and they could be real. Didn't Tom send you an e-mail that his account on Facebook was hacked? Or have we started a new scene of the play?
- Katrina: I haven't checked my e-mail since we travelled to Rome. Give me the laptop so that perhaps I might understand.

Katrina signed into her account and she found two e-mails from Tom. The first one read that his account had been hacked, while the second one contained indecent photos; the same photos of Tom on Facebook, titled "This is the evidence of guiltlessness and honesty". She looked carefully at the photo and she found that the person next to Tom was George, and not her!

- Katrina: George, actually you're the one who is cheating on me. Look at the photos carefully.
- George: Cheating on you?! With whom?!
- Katrina: With Tom. Isn't that an act of homosexuality, O protestant?!

George looked carefully at the photos. It was clear that they were the same photos - the same fabricated photos. George looked down for a while, and then raised his head sighing with confusion.

- George: What have I done? I kicked Tom out of the house.
- Katrina: And you doubted me, George!
- George: And I hung up the phone on Adam, thinking that he wanted to continue in the play, in agreement with Tom.
- Katrina: Why all this, George?
- George: Adam advised me more than once not to make any decision while I'm angry or weak. I don't know what I should do now. Sorry, Katrina, I misjudged you.
- Katrina: Just sorry?! After all you've done?!
- George: Well, what do you want me to do?
- Katrina: I don't know, but the apology should comply with the size of the mistake.
- George: Forgive me, please. And I'll see what I can do to repair the damage I caused with Tom and Adam.
- Katrina: Though you've hurt me deeply and unexpectedly, I'll forgive you on one condition: that you remember Adam's advice which you have just mentioned.
- George: Thank you, Katrina. You are very kind. I don't know how to thank you and make it up to you.
- He stood up and hugged her, then said: I'll make it up to Tom and Adam as well. Will you please excuse me for a while?
- Katrina: Okay. And though I'm hurt, I'll pray for God to help you.

George sat on the laptop, opened his e-mail, and wrote the following:

Dear Tom,

After what happened between us, I'll get directly to what I want to say; that I misjudged you and I apologize. You came to my house and apologized, you expected forgiveness from me, please just treat me the same. If you want me to come to your clinic to kick me out, then I'm ready. I repeat my apologies,

George."

Afterwards, he phoned Adam and apologized to him.

- George: I bought you this very fancy but very cheap bag.
- Adam: Did you find it with these specifications?
- George: Yes, when can you come and take it?
- Adam: Ha ha ha... whenever it suits you, in order for you not to talk to me the way you did today.
- George: Anytime that suits you. And pardon me; I was in a tense situation. I'll tell you when I see you.
- Adam: Visit me at the café. It's been ages since you last visited me there.
- George: Okay. I'll come by today or tomorrow.

He hung up and checked his e-mail again, waiting for Tom's reply. He found that the same e-mail that Tom had sent to Katrina had been sent to him as well. While checking it, he received a reply from Tom to his e-mail, saying:

"Listen and follow my instructions, so that I may forgive you:

1- Come to my clinic at 1 p.m. and then I'll decide whether I'll kick you out or not.

2- Don't do this headless behavior again.

3- Confirm your commitment to the instructions in the e-mail once you've read it,

Dr. Tom"

George replied:

"Dear Tom,

I agree, even if you kick me out. I've made a mistake,

George"

As soon as he sent the reply, Tom phoned him.

- Tom: Hello!
- George: Hello! I repeat my apologies. I was very angry.
- Tom: It's okay, but I forgot one more condition I didn't mention, and you have to accept it.
- George: What is it?
- Tom (Laughing): Come on, George, it's over… I was just kidding. We have an appointment tomorrow for a very important session.
- George: Thanks, Tom.
- Tom: If you come late, I'll ... ha ha ha... I'll wait for you.
- George: I'll come on time... I repeat my apologies.

(2)

After finishing his call with Tom, George remembered his appointment with Adam…

- George: I'm going out to see Adam at the cafe.
- Katrina: Adam's such a wise and sane man. If I weren't busy I'd go with you.
- George: That's right, and even I don't know what he gets from being my friend?!
- Katrina: Friendship aren't built and based on materialistic gains.
- George: Maybe we'll have lunch together; this is the only benefit he gets from being my friend as he lives alone.

When George arrived at the café, Adam welcomed him saying that his shift would end in half an hour and he could have his coffee till it ended. When Adam finished his shift, he joined George to have lunch in the "Happiness Restaurant".

- Adam: We have one hour to have lunch and then we must go back to the café, okay? And now tell me how the stronghold and center of Catholicism was?
- George: You won't get upset if I tell you?
- Adam: And what would make me angry! It seems that you have become very sensitive!
- George: I can't believe in the Old Testament; so Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and even Islam won't be suitable for me.
- Adam: Firstly, why are you so prejudiced against the Torah? Is this based on that verse you sent us?
- George: This is one reason, and I've about a hundred other reasons to believe that the Torah's distorted.
- Adam: And what about the New Testament?
- George: The same, but maybe a little bit better.
- Adam: And the Qur'an?
- George: The same too as it believes in the Old and New Testament.
- Adam: I wish you wouldn't make such rash judgments.
- George: Despite all of this, I've a feeling that I'll find an answer to all my questions.
- Adam: Absolutely.
- George: The problem is that if there's no right religion, then the solution is atheism!

- Adam: Atheism isn’t and never can be the path to happiness or the answer to life’s questions.
- George: Then where is the path?
- Adam: Keep searching and you’ll find it.
- George: Ha ha ha… maybe the path is Islam, the religion of terrorism!
- Adam: When you asked if people wanted to know about Islam, the answer was always yes. By the way, these people come from different religions, so why don’t you want to know about Islam?
- George: I want to know about Islam more than any one of you, and because of many others reasons, more than those which you mentioned. It is enough to say that if Islam isn’t the right religion, then no religion is right.
- Adam: I don’t think that you should study any religion in this way!
- George: Here’s the “Happiness Restaurant”; I wish we will reach the path to happiness. Let’s continue talking inside.

They chose a table, and then the waiter took their order. When the waiter left, Adam looked at George firmly…

- Adam: I’ll continue what I was saying … when you were arranging to travel to Rome and started to read about Christianity, what did I tell you?
- George: You told me to be open-minded and not to make premature judgments.
- Adam: I’m repeating what I said again; you shouldn’t study Islam except in this way.
- George: I started to think about the books I wanted to read about Islam when I was on the plane.
- Adam: If you want my advice, start with the Qur’an before any other book.
- George: But why didn’t I start with the revealed books of Judaism and Christianity?
- Adam: Because Judaism doesn’t encourage the reading of the Old Testament – it even intentionally keeps some of its texts hidden. And concerning Christianity, it doesn’t encourage the person to read the New Testament by himself, as you have to understand it the way the rabbis and pastors do.
- George: And what about the Qur’an?
- Adam: Didn’t I say that you don’t understand Islam! Islam made Qur’an the basic reference when studying Islam and when preaching, warning and calling Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

- George: It sounds that you're acquainted with Islam; did you study it during your study of religions?
- Adam: Yes.
- George: Tell me honestly, what do you think about it?
- Adam: Someone like you can't be dictated about what to think; read the Qur'an and make your own decision.
- George: Tell me honestly, what's your religion? At first, I thought you were a Jew, then a Christian, and now you seem to be a Muslim!
- Adam: Didn't you think that I was a Buddhist or a Hindu when I told you to learn about Buddhism and Hinduism? I want to assure you that if one isn't open-minded and free from that box that controls his mind, he'll never advance. I'll tell you what my religion is after you know all you want about the path to happiness, maybe my way will be an alternative to all the religions.
- George: It never came to my mind that it could be an alternative way to all the religions!
- Adam: Read the Qur'an and also what is written about Islam and about its Prophet, then try to make comparisons between all the religions; the skill of connecting subjects and information together is very important to attain success.
- George: How can I connect all of the subjects together?
- Adam: In order not to lose your bearing, remember things you hated in Buddhism and Hinduism and make sure they don't exist in Judaism, Christianity or Islam, and also make sure that things you loved about Buddhism exist in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this way you can make connections between the different subjects.
- George: I like this comprehensive, integrated view about what I want and what I don't want.
- Adam: Consider similarities and differences among the religions too.
- George: Unfortunately, I see more similarities than differences!
- Adam: Connecting between them will activate the mind and your thinking. Make sure you connect comprehensive issues, not just fine details.
- George: But I see similarities, as I think that all of the religions believe in the Old Testament. And I believe that anybody who believes in the Old Testament must be really insane.
- Adam: However, Christians believe that the New Testament was revealed to com-

plete the old one, so they believe in the Old Testament while Jews don't believe in the New Testament. On the other hand, Muslims believe in them both, they also believe they have been distorted and that what exists now isn't from God. Muslims believe in the Qur'an and think that it abrogates what was revealed before; so don't you notice that all of them are very different?

- George: Yes, very different actually. But I tend to notice similarities more than differences, and I don't connect different subjects a lot.
- Adam: Great, finding out the problem is the way to reach the solution. If you find the solution, you'll have an integrated view. If you could please finish your lunch, I have to go now so that I won't be late for work.
- George: Fine, let's go. By the way, your very luxurious and very cheap bag is in the car.
- Adam: Although you laughed at me, you brought one which is just what I wanted.
- George: We found it by coincidence as there was a shop that was selling off their bags, and it was the last good quality bag there.
- Adam: Coincidence shows humans' inability to understand what God destines for us. Sadly, we usually use the word "coincidence" when we don't know how something happened, which means that we think we're aware of what happens in the whole universe and when something we don't know takes place we use the word "coincidence", as if our ignorance of something means that there's no knowledge of it in this world. This, of course, is a kind of blameworthy self-appreciation and arrogance… or maybe it's out of being unintentionally affected by atheism.
- George: I'm getting tired of your philosophy and you being so specific when referring to different terms… ha ha ha … okay; God destined me to find that last bag. Have I passed the test now?
- Adam: Ha ha ha… as long as the bag is extremely luxurious and cheap.
- George: In this case, I've passed the test. Here's the bag.
- Adam: It's fantastic, it's just what I wanted; and this shows that sometimes we don't reach the truth through the use of only our minds.
- George: But truth can't contradict the mind, as real truth is only that which the mind accepts, and if there are any contradictions between the real truth and the mind, then one of them must be wrong.
- Adam: You're right, that's a good point; now you tell me who the philosopher is?!

- George: I hurt Tom and kicked him out when he was in my house, but then I apologized and he forgave me. By the way, I have a session with him tomorrow.
- Adam: You kicked him out then apologized and he forgave you just like that! What a mannerly guy! I didn't expect Tom to reach this level so fast!
- George: What do you mean?
- Adam: According to what you've just said, Tom's getting better, and usually one doesn't ascend from the bottom to have such good manners so fast.
- George: Didn't you meet with Tom after you'd met in the hospital the first time?
- Adam: Yes, more than once.
- George: More than once?!
- Adam: That's right. In fact I felt at ease with him and I think he felt the same.
- George: And what do you think about him?
- Adam: He's smart, level-headed and experiencing a great period of transformation.
- George: Transformation from what to what?
- Adam: From what he was to a better state.
- George: And what is that better state?
- Adam: Maybe it's the path to happiness that you're seeking.
- George: And will he find it but I won't?!
- Adam: Aren't you experiencing a great period of transformation just like him? It seems that you feel jealous and don't want him to find the path!
- George: What matters is how the session is going to be.
- Adam: I presume it will be as usual.
- George: And what is that usual?
- Adam: You know that better than me.
- George: The usual is to ask me about the previous research reading and discussions, and then we start a new stage.
- Adam: Then that's what you have to expect.
- George: Do you expect me to discuss with him about distorted Christianity, or to study that underdeveloped Islam?
- Adam: Yes, I expect both this and that.
- George: And to follow the same path fairly. But should I go to Tora Bora, just as I did with the other religions?! Have you lost your mind, Adam!
- Adam: Ha ha ha! No, I don't think so. But to be fair, you should go to somewhere

just as you've done with the other religions… ha ha ha, but not necessarily Tora Bora.

- George: I'm not a Muslim so I can't go to Mecca, unless I pretend to be a Muslim.
- Adam: Do you think that you'll find the path to happiness by lying?!
- George: But what can I do if Islam is difficult? I went to Rome although I'm not a Catholic; moreover, you can go to the Vatican even if you're an atheist.
- Adam: I understand what you are trying to say, but tell me: can somebody from Mecca go to Britain without fulfilling the conditions to enter?
- George: I understand what you mean, but this is different.
- Adam: No, there's no difference. If you don't follow rules, you can't access any part of this world. Can a penniless person go to that "Happiness Restaurant" and make an order as we've done?
- George: You're right, but maybe I don't fulfill the conditions to be a Muslim.
- Adam: Maybe, who knows?
- George: You're so weird today, but we've reached the café. We should meet again soon.
- Adam: Ha ha ha! I'll be looking forward to your call… or will we meet in Tora Bora?!

(3)

George went to Tom on time, but he found the door closed, so he knocked. Tom opened the door, saying:

- Tom: Come in, please… sorry for that, the clinic is closed until the troubles Brad is making is over. He is still turning all the people I know against me.
- George: So what are you going to do about it?
- Tom: I don't know, but surely the whole matter will be solved sooner or later.
- George: Why don't you negotiate with him?
- Tom: Negotiate what?!
- George: I don't know, but you have to stop his evil.
- Tom: I prefer to choose his evil over what he wants from me. It's weird, but despite his harm, I'm much happier than I was when he used to serve me.
- George: Life's full of paradoxes and wonders; a monk commits adultery, a prophet strips, a god kills, and despite it all, we shouldn't object or criticize!
- Tom: Let's return to our main subject: tell me what you honestly think about the

Catholic Church.

- George: Honestly, I found that it is impossible for any reasonably minded person to accept it!
- Tom: Maybe this is because you're a Protestant!
- George: The Protestant Church is very similar to Catholicism, so I don't think what you said is the problem. The problem is …
- Tom: …is what?
- George: Actually, the problem's about paganism.
- Adam: Paganism?!
- George: Oh how I tired myself thinking about this, but this is the truth. The paganism of the papacy, of the trinity, of idols, of…
- Tom: You mean the problem is the church?!
- George: No, the problem is the Bible itself; both the Old and New Testament. In order to solve this problem, the Catholic Church confined the reading of the Bible to its monks who are the only ones allowed to interpret it; as for the Protestant Church, it allowed all people to read it, as they wanted.
- Tom: A deep analysis, but why do you think they did that?
- George: Because those who wrote the Bible made some amendments to it, then pastors and monks gathered and amended it again.... after that it was amended many times, which made it a book that contradicts itself, which logically violates the statement that it has been revealed by God.
- Tom: Why wasn't it written when Christ was alive?
- George: In that time, Christians were oppressed and being chased, so it was actually written quite a long time after Christ had died by unknown people and even in a different language from that of Christ's. The problem is that the dilemma and the unscholarly compilation of the Bible can never be solved, and as a result contradictions between the different copies of the Bible increased, and there were even contradictions between the reports in any one single copy; contradictions that clash with reason, logic, facts and science.
- Tom: Enough! It seems that you're prejudiced against the Bible!
- George: I'm not at all. But believe me, I tried to follow and accept the Bible, but I failed!
- Tom: How is that?
- George: I'll give you two examples; first: in order to believe in everything cited in

the Bible, I have to cripple my mind but if I do that, I won’t be able to understand it at all.

- Tom: Nice philosophy…practical, amazing mentality.
- George: Second: if I decide to understand and submit and cripple my mind, the Bible itself says it isn’t for me!
- Tom: Please tell me how!!
- George: In the Bible we have the saying of Jesus: (I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel) and I’m not of “the sons of Israel”, so Jesus wasn’t sent for me.
- Tom: So you’re not a Christian?!
- George: Maybe… I really don’t know! I’m afraid that I have become an atheist because of you!
- Tom: My original plan was for you to become an atheist, and I fear that it may have succeeded. But I’ve changed recently, and since I understand atheism better than you do, let me tell you something: there’s no real atheism. It is only a pretense; a way to escape from answering the major questions in life. You can escape through atheism, wine, sex or anything else, but you’ll later find out that you’re living the worst form and most miserable way of life. Atheism is just a way of escaping from the truth; it isn’t a type of internal belief.
- George: Unfortunately, your plan has started to succeed. I’m afraid of losing hope in finding the path to happiness.
- Tom: Maybe this is because of our ignorance. We’ve let something pass without understanding or analyzing it. Anyhow, we’ve decided not to make any decisions until we finish.
- George: What do you mean by your saying: we’ve let something pass without understanding or analyzing it?! This is the same logic of Catholicism.
- Tom: That’s right, to some extent. But intellectually and logically, isn’t it possible that we are mistaken, or at least that we’re liable to make mistakes?
- George: Yes, of course it is possible, while thinking that you’re always right isn’t acceptable.
- Tom: Ha ha ha! Good…so Catholicism suits the intellect… anyway, we’ve agreed not to make any decisions until we’re finished.
- George: I hope this isn’t one of your usual ways of introducing a new plan; the study of Islam.

- Tom: Of course, that's what I'm suggesting… I've even started studying Islam myself, and I'm trying hard to be open minded about it. I told you before: I'm seeking the path to happiness, just like you.

George hit his hands together, saying:

- George: It seems that we've started on a path that has no end.
- Tom: I started reading the Qur'an, the holy book of the Muslims, yesterday.
- George: Ha ha ha! Adam tried to persuade me to read it too, but I didn't respond; I feel that I would be just wasting my time.
- Tom: He gave me a copy of the Qur'an translated into English… he thinks that I might convert to Islam after reading it.
- George: He wants you to convert to Islam! What made him think that?
- Tom: All people call others to their own religion and ideas.
- George: I don't understand! What do you mean?
- Tom: Adam wants me to convert to his religion… What's so difficult to understand about that?!
- George: He's a Muslim!!!?
- Tom: Yes, it's so clear. He looks like an Arab. Haven't you noticed that?
- George: No, I haven't. His name isn't Arabic and I was thinking that he was a Catholic of Indian descent. I hope he hasn't been fooling with me.
- Tom: He's named after the father of all humans, and we use that name just like the Arabs do. I don't think he has been fooling you unless he's lied to you. Did he lie about anything you asked him?
- George: I asked him many times about his religion and he didn't answer, but what matters is: was he trying to guide me to Islam? I don't like being fooled.
- Tom: And would you be fooled if he just called you to his religion?!
- George: No, but I'm afraid…
- Tom: There's nothing to fear, unless you're afraid of converting to Islam!
- George: Yes, I'm afraid of being driven to something without knowing or understanding it.
- Tom: And are you so weak to be driven by Adam while pastors themselves couldn't do that?! Or is Adam so powerful that you have become afraid of him?

George gestured with his hands, answering:

- George: It's not either of them. Why are you talking to me in this way?!
- Tom: Because you've turned from a lion with all the religions to a bunny, terrified

of Islam.

- George: I'm not terrified, and I'll study Islam… by the way, concerning your discussions about changing, Adam has written about your changes.
- Tom: My changes?! I'm still stuck with Brad, but he's writing about changes?!
- George: Have a look on his Facebook profile and read what he writes.
- Tom: I shall. But concerning your studies, it is important to be open minded when studying Islam, just as you were with the other religions, okay?
- George: Okay.
- Tom: And be critical of it as you were with the other religions too?
- George: Yes, and even more so.
- Tom: No, this isn't what we agreed on; to be more critical of it means you will be more prejudiced and more close minded about it. You should do it being open minded, just as you did with Judaism, Christianity, and the other religions.
- George: Do you want me to just submit and not be critical of it?!
- Tom: I want you to be open and keen to accept knowledge, then you can be critical of Islam with an open mind, just as you were with Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism.
- George: But I was very critical of those religions, and their falseness became clear, at least to me.
- Tom: Then show the falseness of Islam too, but I prefer you to study it first and then decide; maybe something we never thought about might appear.
- George: And what are we going to do when we find the falseness and contradictions of Islam? Are we going to turn back to atheism?
- Tom: I don›t know! All I know is that maybe something unexpected might appear.
- George: As you›ve started reading the Qur›an, what do you think about it?
- Tom: I just started yesterday and I have only read a little, but so far it›s interesting.
- George: Oh you›re a Muslim too. Ha ha ha… have I become suspicious or what?!
- Tom: No, no, don›t worry, I›m not.
- George: So what are you?
- Tom: I›m just like you; I really don›t know what I am. I feel that I keep fluctuating from one thing to another.
- George: This is what Adam says about you; you keep changing.
- Tom: Maybe he›s right; I›ll read what he wrote about me today, but tell me his full name to be able to find his Facebook account.

- George: You can find his email account in my emails, and you should be able to find his Facebook page from it.
- Tom: Good. Okay we›ll study Islam with an open mind.
- George: Ha ha ha… and we will go to Afghanistan or Tora Bora with an open mind too.
- Tom: I don›t know why you›re talking as though you›re sure you will convert to Islam.
- George: I›m just kidding.
- Tom: By the way, did you fight with Katrina about your opinion of Catholicism?
- George: Yes, but it seems like she has started to accept my views.
- Tom: But I felt that she truly worshipped and loved Jesus when she went to the church.
- George: This was my feeling too, but she has become extremely shocked by Catholicism and its doctrines… can you believe that she was very confused when we met a Muslim in Rome!! And became more confused when she found out that the pastor who guided her to faith and certitude had no answer to my doubts!
- Tom: How much I like her religiosity!
- George: Convert to Catholicism then.
- Tom: And how much I hate contradictions with science!
- George: Ha ha ha… then convert to Islam and go to Tora Bora!
- Tom: Believe me, if I›m convinced by Islam and have to go there, I›ll go.
- George: I like your strong determination, but unfortunately I don›t see any light at the end of the tunnel.
- Tom: Me too, but I›m sure that the light will suddenly appear… how, I don’t know; but I›m sure it will.
- George: I feel that too.
- Tom: You didn›t send us a summary of our answers, as you usually do.
- George: Yes, I didn›t check my email yesterday because of your photos. I›ll send it today, and today I›m going to pay special attention to see if Adam›s answers are those of a Muslim›s.
- Tom: His previous answers clearly showed he›s a Muslim.
- George: Maybe, but I wasn›t paying much attention - maybe that›s why he wrote that I don›t connect between topics, incidents, discussions and information.
- Tom: It is very important to connect things.

- George: That›s what he said; it seems that you like him.
- Tom: I didn›t know that this was his opinion, but actually I like how he is psychologically calm and balanced even more.
- George: I agree with you about his level-headedness, and I like his opinions too. By the way, did you get rid of the eavesdropping devices Brad had installed?
- Tom: Yes, and I hope that I'll be done with Brad and his problems soon, as he reminds me of my old miserable life!
- George: You'll be finshed with him soon. Can I leave now?
- Tom: Yes, we're done for today; I think today's session is a great and important one.
- George: So we'll start studying Islam, and I'll go back to my work and see Kach again… oh how I hate these two!
- Tom: Hate what?
- George: Islam and Kach.
- Tom: Here you are being prejudiced again.
- George: Oh sorry… ha ha ha… I should say Kach and Islam… I wonder what is waiting for us!

(4)

George checked his email when he went back home in the evening… he read his friends' replies to his last message in which he asked them to make a comparison between the holy books of the three divine religions:

"Levvi: I haven't read the Qur'an, but I think that the three religions are very similar."

"Habib: The thing they have in common is that they are all from God, but the Qur'an is different as it has remained constant throughout the years and different generations, but I haven't read it in detail."

"Adam: They're all from God, but unfortunately the Torah and Gospel have been distorted."

"Tom: I haven't read the Qur'an so I can't make any comparison."

"Katrina: Both the Old and New Testaments are from God, but I don't think that the Qur'an is the same. I haven't read it yet, perhaps I'll give it a go."

"Janolka: I started reading the Qur'an just yesterday, and I think it's different from the Torah and Gospel, but don't know exactly how."

George focused on Adam's answer and pondered over his way of writing. All of his friends frankly mentioned that they hadn't read the Quran before or had only read it casually, except Adam; he's the only who didn't refer to that. George sent the answers back to all his friends, then wrote the sixth point for discussion:

"Sixth discussion point: who can read the Qur'an and study one specific issue: has it remained constant, or has it been distorted? Hope to get your answers in a week from today,

George."

After sending the message, he immediately called Adam …

- George: Although we just saw each other, I really miss you and want to see you again; will tomorrow suit you?
- Adam: It's okay, but let's make it after my shift, it ends at eight o'clock… and maybe we can have dinner together… ha ha ha.
- George: Okay, fine. I start work again tomorrow. It's been about three weeks since the last time I saw Kach's face.
- Adam: See you tomorrow then, bye.

When Katrina came home, she found George totally preoccupied in front of the computer screen . She kissed him and patted him on his shoulder…

- Katrina: Sorry for being late honey, I went to the mall to get some things as the house was empty when we came back from the trip. What a beautiful trip it was!
- George: Yes, it was just amazing. Do you know, the most amazing thing about it was you!
- Katrina: Thanks for those sweet words. The trip ended so fast.
- George: All beautiful things end quickly, my darling. It's the bleak moments that are long and boring, even the good books finish quickly, while the boring ones stay with you for days and weeks. In fact that's why you finished that book Khalid gave you in one sitting.
- Katrina: You mean that book "My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam"?! The point wasn't that it was particularly enjoyable, but that it was very interesting.
- George: So you're going to read the Qur'an, as you said in your message?
- Katrina: Yes, I actually bought a copy yesterday to start reading it.
- George: Oh! This is a major change; Katrina's reading the Qur'an! Will you become a Muslim then?

- Katrina: I’m only going to read it to find out its shortcomings and contradictions.
- George: I just sent an email to everybody, asking you all to read the Qur’an! I’ll get a copy from Adam tomorrow.
- Katrina: And why Adam, exactly?
- George: Because the Qur’an is his holy book.
- Katrina: Is Adam a Muslim?! Didn’t you say he’s a Catholic?!
- George: It was a surprise for me too; in fact I’ll meet him tomorrow for exactly that reason.
- Katrina: Although I’m comfortable with him, I’m not with Muslims; maybe I felt comfortable with him because I thought he was a Catholic.
- George: What you’re saying isn’t fair at all! Aren’t we supposed to judge him regardless of his religious beliefs?
- Katrina: No, any evaluation has to be based on religion; do you want me to treat a Catholic believer as I treat a terrorist Muslim?! Don’t we treat a cultured person better than anyone else, and a well-mannered person better than a bad-mannered one? Manners, culture and religion are the basic criteria that should be used when evaluating anyone.
- George: Maybe this is true if you’re sure that your religion is undoubtedly right as regards manners and culture.
- Katrina: I’m sure about that to a great extent, but do you consider religion to be less important than good manners and high culture?! Ha ha ha! You seem to have been affected by atheism, George.
- George: Maybe; but why were you so worried about Sally and Michael when we were in the church? Where you affected by atheism too?
- Katrina: I wasn’t worried at all; you’re imagining things and believe what you imagine. Anyhow, what should I have been worried about?
- George: I was just kidding; okay you weren’t worried about the kids and weren’t scared of that Muslim who gave you the book; by the way where is it, as I want to read it?
- Katrina: I understand what you are implying; all people are affected by what they hear, read and think about.
- George: Can I ask you a question, and please give me a frank answer?
- Katrina: Sure…
- George: Would you be able to leave Catholicism?

- Katrina: Leave Catholicism?! For what?
- George: For Protestantism, Judaism, Islam or any other religion.
- Katrina: If you had asked me that question just a month before, I would have answered no, of course not… and now I would still say no, but unfortunately I don't know why my faith has become weaker. And although you embarrass me with your questions, they make me more honest with myself.
- George: You're an example of faith for me, and what you've just said is maybe a proof of your faith increasing. Although I'm a Protestant, not a Catholic, I can feel your true faith… you lighten my path.
- Katrina: But the fact is that you are an example for anyone who wants to seek the truth, and you're going to find it… I love you George.

(5)

George went to work in the morning and headed straight to his office… He didn't want to see Kach. He hated Kach but didn't know if it was because he was a Jew or because he was greedy and bad-mannered, or both of them combined. But he felt comfortable with Levvi, although she was a Jew and religious too… he didn't hate anyone for his religion, but he hated contradictions and superstitions in any religion.

But he had to meet Kach, so it was better for him to call Kach before he found out that he had returned and so rings him… while he was engrossed in thinking about Kach, he saw a piece of paper signed by Kach in his office which contained a list of achievements and contracts he had made in India and Tel Aviv, and a large remuneration for his efforts. George wondered if he had exaggerated in hating Kach. Or if he had changed his mind a little about Kach when he learned about the remuneration? Was this remuneration proof that Kach was a good man? Or was it just a bribe, like the one he gave to Benjamin in Jerusalem?!

The telephone rang, it was Kach…

- Kach: Hi George. When I heard that you had returned I waited for you in my office, but you didn't come; will you come to my office or shall I come to yours?
- George: I'll come in a few minutes; I was just tidying things here.
- Kach: I'll be waiting for you, then.

George collected some papers and tidied them, but he couldn't clear his

mixed thoughts and confused mind. When he arrived at Kach's office, the latter welcomed him with open arms…

- Kach: How are you George? I've missed you! Tell me about Rome… in fact tell me about Tel Aviv?
- George: I'm fine and I recovered from my illness. As for Tel Aviv, I signed all the contracts and sent them to you, and about Rome, it was a fantastic trip. But how are you guys, and how are things at work?
- Kach: The contracts of Tel Aviv will yield big progress for the company; the Jewish lobby has great power in many countries so both Europe and America will be opened for us because we signed a contract with Tel Aviv. Do you know that the board of directors decided to give you a large remuneration?
- George: Thanks for that, Kach; I was just doing my job.
- Kach: I don't know how you overcame the obstructions? You're such a brilliant marketer!
- George: There weren't any obstructions; he just signed the contract straight away.
- Kach: Didn't he ask for his sum?
- George: You mean the bribe? He took it.
- Kach: Didn't he ask for something else?
- George: Like what?
- Kach: Never mind. Now tell me, how many nights did you spend with Levvi? I know that she sometimes refuses to do that because she's religious.
- George: I didn't spend the night with her, and I can never do something like that.
- Kach: Crummy Benjamin…he didn't make her do that?!
- George: He's crummy because he took the bribe, and I didn't ask him to spend the night with Levvi. How do you think that I could accept that?! To just ask Benjamin to make her have sex with me?!
- Kach: He signed the contract and that's what matters. I hoped you'd have some fun though, but you refused. If I were you, I'd have spent my nights with her; don't you like her?
- George: I'm a married man Kach; do you want me to betray my wife?! I could never give up my principles.
- Kach: Oh don't start; we use that word 'principles' just when we want to achieve a goal.
- George: Maybe you're talking about something else other than principles, as prin-

ciples can't be overstepped.

- Kach: Do you know that Levvi spends the nights with me every time I go to Tel Aviv? And she's the one who talks the most about principles.
- George: It's just human weakness.
- Kach: That's the philosophy of principles; when we want to achieve a goal, we justify it with principles, but if we want something else, we just justify it as being due to human weakness.

Kach's words aroused something inside George: Kach's right, he bribed Benjamin and justified that with being weak; was he following Kach's theory of principles?

- George: Maybe, but living without any principles is one of the worst states ever, as we wouldn't be much different from animals in such a case.
- Kach: Ha ha ha… excuse me, but animals are better than human beings; at least they have instinctive traits that can't be changed - call them principles if you want.
- George: Actually, you're right, people without values and principles are worse than animals; they turn into monsters that don't care about anything except money, sex and power.
- Kach: Fantastic lecture, man of principles. But let's forget about that now and get back to work! Are you ready to sign a contract in Sweden?
- George: A new trip to Sweden?
- Kach: Yes… in a week, the board of directors unanimously decided to send you there, so they postponed the date of the trip more than once waiting for your return.
- George: What does the contract entail?
- Kach: The same as the one in Tel Aviv, and the conditions are very similar.
- George: How? I don't understand!
- Kach: A sum of money is to be paid to the manager of the technical department in the diplomatic way you are used to, and the contract will be signed, just like that.
- George: I got it, the manager there is just like Benjamin; but is there another Levvi there?
- Kach: Ha ha ha! You told me that you didn't have fun with Levvi, so why are you looking for another Levvi in Sweden? Where are your principles?
- George: I didn't mean that, I'm just looking for similarities.
- Kach: Yes… you'll find another Levvi there, her name is Ingrid and don't worry,

she's as beautiful as Levvi.

- George: That's good, so you wouldn't think my refusal would be because there wouldn't be any ladies there.
- Kach: I don't understand?!
- George: I'm not going to go, and now you can't think that my refusal is because there won't be lustful nights there.
- Kach: And why won't you go?
- George: Didn't you call me a man of principles? Bribes contradict my principles.
- Kach: But you bribed Benjamin to make him sign the contract, didn't you, man of principles?!
- George: It was a mistake; call it human weakness if you want!
- Kach: I told you we use principles only to achieve our goals and interests; what do you want then?
- George: I don't want anything; I just don't want to go.
- Kach: What if I told you that your next remuneration would be twice as much as the previous one? That makes it about three months' salary.
- George: This is not the point….
- Kach: I don't want you to answer now; you have two days to think about it. I'm sure you won't miss a chance like this.
- George: What chance?
- Kach: A chance of traveling, receiving a remuneration and a promotion.
- George: Promotion?!
- Kach: Yes, the board of directors are very impressed by your achievements and if you sign that new contract in Sweden you'll take my place as the general manager of the company.
- George: And what about you?!
- Kach: Maybe I'll be the general manager of the holding company. Think about that, I'm sure you won't miss such a chance. The date of the trip is up to you. Ha ha… the principle in this case would be to deliver the money, or to pay the bribe as you call it.
- George: And if I don't go?!
- Kach: You would harm your position here in the company; I don't think a sane man like you would do that. Believe me, I wish I could travel, but the board of directors are impressed by you and they insisted they wanted you to seal important

contracts like this one.

- George: I'll answer you in a few days.
- Kach: I'm sure you will think correctly and be wise, so I'll ask the public relations to start making your reservations. The contracts will be in your office with a detailed definition of the agreement.
- George: Excuse me; I've some work to do.

George went to his office wondering to himself: "Is Kach right? Are principles just interests that could be changed as we want? Or are they lighthouses showing us the path that we should follow? And if that is the case, then why did he bribe Benjamin in Tel Aviv? And what should he do now? This trip seems to be very important for Kach… perhaps it will determine whether he's going to remain working in this company or be fired… but if principles are really worthless, we'll change into beasts, preying on each other; oh why didn't God control these things? Why did he leave people alone to organize these things themselves?"

He was engrossed in thinking when he received all the papers and documents of the trip. He started to briefly check them, but the question now was if he should travel or not? And if he wouldn't travel, then why should he bother himself with reading them?

George felt that the day was very long and he couldn't wait to go home and discuss things with Katrina. When he got home, he found her completely engrossed in reading…

- George: This book seems to be very interesting!
- Katrina: Somewhat, yes. This is the holy book of the Muslims.
- George: So you've started reading it?
- Katrina: Yes, but despite my poor understanding and being preoccupied by it, I can't resist re-reading the translation of every chapter more than once.
- George: Why?!
- Katrina: I don't know, maybe because it's completely different from what I'm used to reading.
- George: Good, but can we leave this topic now, there's something important I have to discuss with you.
- Katrina: Sure.
- George: Kach offered me a new trip.
- Katrina: This is the first time since you started working in this company that you

have gone on so many consecutive trips. Where will you go this time?

- George: To Sweden.
- Katrina: It’s a beautiful country.
- George: This isn’t the issue.
- Katrina: What is, then?!
- George: When I traveled to Jerusalem to sign the agreement and the contracts, I brought with me a big bribe for the other company’s manager to make him sign the contract, and they want me to do that again in Sweden.
- Katrina: Although I hate bribes very much, but what’s new, you’ve already done it before?!
- George: The same words of Kach.
- Katrina: I hate this Kach, but…
- George: But if I made a mistake the first time, do I have to make it again?! Isn’t there a way to learn from one’s mistakes?!
- Katrina: In Christianity, Jesus has saved and purified us by sacrificing himself for mankind.
- George: But this isn’t confined to any one person, it’s for everybody, even criminals.
- Katrina: I don’t understand?!
- George: I mean: why should we give up our mistakes while we’ve already been purified from them?! I think this is a good way to sell acts of indulgence for automatic forgiveness.
- Katrina: I understand what you mean. This is the case in Catholicism, but it isn’t in Islam. In Islam, if anyone repents and asks God’s forgiveness, God will forgive him.
- George: Oh what progress, you’re talking about Islam just after reading one book! Don’t Muslims have to repent in the presence of their monks and pastors? How is the ritual of salvation done then?
- Katrina: There’s no ritual, the person just returns to God to ask Him for forgiveness, and also abandons their sins while being determined not to do them again.
- George: It is that easy!
- Katrina: Yes.
- George: All of this information is just from that book that the Muslim gave you in Rome!
- Katrina: No, it’s from the Qur’an, the holy book of the Muslims.

- George: Let's return to the problem of Kach.
- Katrina: I don't know what you should do; it's a really difficult choice; saying yes means you lose your principles and your self-respect, while no means losing your job.
- George: Yes, both options are difficult and I've two days to answer him. If you were me, what would you do?
- Katrina: I'm confused just like you. I was going to discuss something with you, but you started talking about your problem first, and I don't want you to have even more problems.
- George: What happened?
- Katrina: I'm not sure any more about what I teach in the school, so I'm thinking about quitting my job.
- George: Quitting your job?!
- Katrina: As you don't want to lose your principles, I don't want to lose them too. When I'm teaching I say many things that I don't actually believe in, so I have two choices now: to teach things I don't believe in and contradict my principles, or leave my job and lose my payment.
- George: This is a great change. You've been teaching these things for ten years, what happened now? And if we all quit our jobs, how can we live under the increasing unemployment, not just here in Britain, but in the whole world?
- Katrina: What happened is that my belief in Catholicism has been shaken; isn't this what you wanted?! Anyway, I haven't made any decision yet.
- George: Sorry for making you upset, I was just kidding.
- Katrina: No, on the contrary you opened my eyes. But I didn't want to tell you at first so as not to make you more confused.
- George: You're right; I have become more confused now… I'll think carefully and make my decision in two days, and you make yours too; truly, life is full of important decisions.
- Katrina: George, you have to consult with someone.
- George: But who can understand my problem with work?
- Katrina: Any of your friends. You can put it in the discussion points you send to us throught the e-mail.
- George: Great idea, I'll send it now.

George went to his room upstairs, turned on his computer, and typed this message to his friends:

"Seventh discussion point: I have a problem and want to share it with you before you answer the sixth discussion point. The problem is: should I follow my principles even if they could destroy my life? Or should I follow my interests even if they would spoil my principles? Isn't there any way to keep one's principles and interests at the same time, without any contradiction between the two? Please give me a clear and frank answer, as if it was your own problem,

George."

After sending the message, he browsed Tom's profile on Facebook. It had finally been restored with an apology from Tom about the fake Photoshopped pictures that had been posted… George felt comfortable as it seemed that Tom had regained his Facebook page and had ended his problems with Brad. After that, he browsed Adam's page to find a new article with the title "Lessons from my friend on his quest to find happiness: 4."

My friend is now facing the most difficult period in his quest, and we can notice these points in this stage of his search:

1. Knowing what you don't want is much easier than knowing what you want; knowing that something isn't the path to happiness is easier than knowing what the actual path to happiness is, as changing, transformations and new situations are very difficult for anyone.

2. The person needs great courage with oneself to make any decision; courage is the label of any mental, military or moral success. My friend is very courageous, but he needs courage now more than ever before - so can he still remain courageous?

3. My friend and the people around him are experiencing a time of change that he didn›t realize or pay enough attention to, as he until now doesn't know that I›m a Muslim – which is weird. And he›ll also be surprised soon at the major changes those closest to him are also going through.

5. Although he›s keen on knowledge, he didn›t make the decision to study Islam that easily; maybe this is because of the many suspicions aroused by the media about Islam, and perhaps Muslims should be also blamed, for their errors and mistakes.

I still think that my friend is in the final stages of his quest to find happiness and to find an answer to the major questions of life. Wait for the next lessons soon,

Adam»

George re-read the article very carefully, and then wondered to himself: does Adam think that Islam is the only path to happiness?! Then why didn't he say that from the very beginning? Is he playing with me?! Or is Islam based on

deception?! If he thinks that Islam is the path to happiness, why did he hide the fact that he is a Muslim?! Is it a shame that one should escape from? Or is it due to a religious secret, like the secrets of the church? While he was so engrossed in thinking, Katrina entered…

- George: Come and read what Adam wrote about me, I have started to doubt him.
- Katrina: What did he write?
- George: Here it is, read.

Katrina read the article concentrating deeply, and then turned to George…

- Katrina: I still don't understand what you doubt in him?!
- George: He's Muslim and he thinks that Islam is the path to happiness that will answer my questions!
- Katrina: Yes, darling, this is quite normal; it's normal for him to think that what he has is the path to happiness.
- George: But…why didn't he tell me before? Why has he deceived me?
- Katrina: Did he fool you and tell you something that isn't true?
- George: No, but he hid his religion from me.
- Katrina: I think he told you clearly, but you didn't notice.
- George: How?!
- Katrina: He wrote his religion in the information section on his Facebook profile page. He didn't hide his religion at all, he's even proud of it. He wrote in the space for religion "Muslim and proud of it".
- George: Can you believe it; I've never noticed that, although I browse his profile often? Adam's right; I don't connect things enough.
- Katrina: You asked us all to read the Qur'an and answer you, so have you started reading it yet?
- George: No, I was busy with the problem of Kach. I'll meet Adam today and start reading the Qur'an, and try to make a decision about work today or tomorrow.
- Katrina: Don't let Adam be wiser than us, listen to him calmly and let us learn better to be able to debate with him…maybe he wants us to convert to Islam, so let him enter Christianity with us instead.
- George: Perhaps! I'll go to him now and try to listen and learn calmly to be able to discuss with him with knowledge, and I think I'll dine with him too.

Changes and Conversions

14

Changes and Conversions

Changes and Conversions

(1)

George left for the café to meet Adam, but when he arrived he didn't find him. He asked another waiter who was working there about his absence, but the waiter replied that he had no news about him…

- George: I saw Adam just yesterday and we agreed that we'd meet here today.
- Waiter: We don't know why he didn't show up for work this morning. In fact his absence is very strange. Don't worry, he'll probably come tomorrow.

George left the café and went straight to Adam's house; he knocked on the door but nobody was there. He even tried to call Adam on his mobile, but he couldn't reach him, so he returned home feeling rather anxious and uneasy.

- George: Katrina, Adam has disappeared; I couldn't find him at the cafe, he's not at his house, and I couldn't reach him on his cell phone.
- Katrina: Darling, this isn't the first time this has happened; don't you remember this happened before?
- George: Yes, you're right. I thought he was with those who were imprisoned because they were accused of that terrorist explosion, but I didn't even know he was Muslim then.
- Katrina: I don't know him as well as you, but I do respect him. I saw how compassionate he was when you were sick, and I saw how he reacted to Kach's ill manners.
-
- George: And what you don't know about him, but what I know for sure it that he always advised me properly and wanted the best for me, I saw this often. I was even surprised at how he would care for me in this way.
- Katrina: What's surprising about it?
- George: It wasn't surprising until I knew he wasn't a Christian.
- Katrina: I don't understand, why?
- George: Because he was the one who urged me to go to Tel Aviv and learn the Jewish religion, he also urged me to learn Christianity and go to Rome. But why on earth would he do this when he's not a Christian?
- Katrina: Maybe it's a sign of the confidence he has in his religion.

- George: Or maybe because of his confidence in the way of life and path he follows?
- Katrina: Anyway, the Holy Qur'an is a rather unusual book, aren't you going to read it this week as you said in your email?
- George: Yes, I will, but the problem with Kach is really annoying me, and then the disappearance of Adam. Nonetheless, have you finished reading it yet? I want to read it.
- Katrina: Yes, I have, but I think I need to read it again. Would you like me to buy you a copy?
- George: Okay, buy me a copy if you're near a bookshop, but what language is it in?
- Katrina: The holy Qur'an is only in Arabic.
- George: How can you read it then?
- Katrina: I only read the translation.
- George: When it comes to the Bible don't we read the translation of both the Old and New Testament, so what's the difference here, anyway?
- Katrina: Based on your questions in the e-mail, I have actually revised and read about this very subject. The Qur'an has been transferred in the most precise and accurate way ever known in history. A lot of people have transferred the holy Qur'an from Muhammad, who then transferred it to many others, even up until this day, and it hasn't been distorted by any of those who transferred it up until this day. But the translations, however, might include some misrepresentations and errors.
- George: How?
- Katrina: A lot of priests have actually translated it, but they did it in the manner that suited them, and there are also some evident errors in some of their translations.
- George: Then should we say that the Qur'an belongs to only the Arabs, and the one that is for others includes errors?
- Katrina: Perhaps, but that's not what I said! You can find in many places where it actually states that it is not just for the Arabs, as it is "for all people" (translation of Quran). Also there are many translations that are good, but when there seems to be any errors, one should refer to the Arabic text. What is even more remarkable is that the Qur'an has been transferred accurately not only in its written or

verbal form, but also the way in which it should be pronounced as well.

- George: And what are the criteria to know if the translation is correct?
- Katrina: The translator only translates the meaning of the Qur’an and not the Qur’an itself, since the Qur’an is only in Arabic. But you will notice that when you read it.
- George: I’m tired now and I want to sleep, but I’m also hungry and need to eat, and I’m worried about Adam, and also confused and I want to give my reply to Kach - and you’re busy only thinking about the translations of the Qur’an!

Katrina smiled and then said:

- Katrina: Then let’s have supper quietly together, and leave the other things aside for now.

The next morning George woke up and prepared himself for work. He left feeling heavy headed and depressed, wondering if it was because of Kach or because of the confusing matter he was concerned with which he hadn’t decided about yet?

He entered his office and called Adam. He couldn’t reach him, so he sent him a message. A few minutes passed and Kach called him to come to his office.

- Kach: You look so worried, what’s wrong?
- George: Nothing, I’m just a little bit tired.
- Kach: But you seem worried!
- George: It’s nothing for you to be concerned about, I just can’t find one of my dearest friends and have been looking for him. I’m a little bit worried about him.
- Kach: Did you look for him at his work, house and through his friends?
- George: Yes, and what is peculiar is that his friend, the waiter in the café, said he didn’t say he wouldn’t go to work, and that’s not like him.
- Kach (laughing): Ha ha ha, your dearest friend! Isn’t he that waiter we met in the hospital?
- George: Yes.
- Kach: I was about to kick him out of the hospital. How can you have a waiter as a friend?
- George: It’s Katrina who almost threw you out when you attacked him. Adam is my dearest friend and I don’t like you talking about him like this.
- Kach: You’re a candidate for the position of the manager of the company, and then you tell me a waiter is your best friend! I’m afraid that despite your function-

al efficiency, your social intelligence is limited, which is really important when you hold high positions.

- George: Does social intelligence mean treating people rudely, obnoxiously and arrogantly?
- Kach: It means having the skills to win the favor of important characters who can increase your income and your chances as well.
- George: Is friendship for you a way to get more money and opportunities?
- Kach: Yes, all the life is like that - but I don't know when you will eventually understand this.
- George: I don't want to understand this.
- Kach: My friend, calm down! When will you travel?
- George: I don't' want to be your friend, and I prefer Adam's friendship than yours.
- Kach: Ha ha ha … Calm down! What is important for me is your work, not your friendship. So, when will you go to Sweden?
- George: I'll let you know tomorrow, excuse me.
- Kach: Actually we have already booked your tickets; you can collect them from William. And don't forget to tell us when you find that waiter friend of yours, ha ha ha.

George went to his office reprimanding himself for not standing up to Kach and telling him that he wouldn't go to Sweden and he wouldn't contradict his principles. Was it because of the fear of losing his job? If that was the case, then he must be just like Kach who only cares about money, and he must be just hiding under the mask of fake principles…

Kach seemed to be very frank with himself and correct when he said that people only stuck to principles as long as they were in their interests, but if they weren't in their interests they would throw these principles behind their backs and renounce them. He wanted to go to Kach and tell him his decision, no matter what might happen, but he decided to write a letter saying he wouldn't travel, instead. At that very moment, William entered his office.

- William: Here are the tickets from Kach.
- George: I'm feeling rather uneasy with Kach's insistence that I travel, though I don't want to. And I know that you or the marketing manager is able to travel, so why do I have to travel when it's your duty travel, not mine?!
- William: He's forced to do that, it's not his choice.

- George: How?! I don't understand!
- William: When you were in Tel Aviv a decision was made to promote you to general manager, and for Kach to take another position at another branch, so Kach couldn't find a way to delay this except by telling them that there was some kind of work which could only be accomplished by you, and that he would delay implementing this decision until you had accomplished the task.
- George: And if I don't finish the task?
- William: I don't know. I would have liked to travel but Kach refused, so here are the tickets; your flight is in about nine days from now.
- George: Things are more understandable now; I now know why he insisted that I travel. Can you send me the telephone number and email of the client in Sweden, please?
- William: Check your mail in five minutes and you will find it in your inbox.
- George: And also the telephone numbers of the board of directors and their e-mails too.
- William: Okay, I'll send them to you as well.
- George: Thanks a lot William.

George resumed writing his letter to Kach, but he changed his mind about writing to Kach and wrote to the board of directors instead:

"Dear board of directors,

It has been my utmost pleasure to have worked in this company for more than fourteen years and it is an honor to have gained your trust, and I hope that I'm qualified for that trust, since the success of this company has been my mission. I would like to thank you for encouraging me in a way that helped me to accomplish what I've accomplished for this company.

I sincerely wish that you will accept my resignation, as although I thought that you would value my efforts, I have been threatened to be expelled from this company if I don't go against the ethics of my career and my principles. I hope to receive all the rights that are due to me, for resigning is better for both the company and me than betraying the principles I believe in.

I thank you all sincerely.

Yours truly,

George Neason"

As soon as he had finished writing the letter, he looked into his inbox and

found that the addresses of the e-mails of all the members of the board of directors had been sent to him, so he sent the last message to all of them, including Kach, then he left the company heading to Adam's house. But no one answered him at Adam's house, so he went to the café where he didn't find him either, so he asked the waiter about Adam. The waiter answered him:

- Waiter: You're the same one who came yesterday. He didn't come today either, but someone called an hour ago and said that he had an accident, and that he is in the hospital now and is getting better.

(2)

George called the hospital and headed straight towards it. On his way he called Katrina and said to her:

- George: He was by my side when I was in the hospital, I must stand beside him as well.
-
- Katrina: Can you come and pick me up and we will visit him together?
- George: I'm very near the hospital now. I'll visit him first and you can visit him in the evening.

George entered the hospital and asked for Adam's room number. When he reached the room he found Adam sleeping in his bed and his leg wrapped up, and there was a number of people around him.

- George: Hello there! How are you Adam, what happened?
- Adam: Hello, I'm alright George. Sorry I just saw your message now as I got my cell phone a few minutes ago. How are you?
- George: What happened?
- Adam: I fell when I was walking down the stairs and broke my leg. I was taken to the hospital and had an operation, but now I'm okay.
- George: So why didn't you let me know? I've been worried sick since your sudden disappearance.
- Adam: Thanks and so sorry George, you're very kind. As a matter of fact I didn't call anyone, my friend who accompanied me to the hospital only called our mutual friends; Let me introduce you to them: Ahmed from Syria an electronic engineer, Adrian from Britain a pharmacist, 'Ali from Saudi Arabia a higher education studies scholar and Bassem El-Azhary from Egypt imam of the Islamic center in

London, this is George, software engineer and vice president of a reputable software company. Actually, he’s the one who brought me that luxurious bag some of you commented on.

- George: Pleased to meet you all. This is the first time I have meet the friends of my friend.
- Adam: George is always busy traveling, but he’s just a phone call away.
- George: As Adam has introduced me, I’m an ex-vice president now, and I’ve learnt a lot from Adam.
- Adam: What? Since when are you no longer part of the company?
- George: Since about an hour ago, I handed in my resignation just before coming to you.
- Adam: But why?
- George: It’s a long story; we’ll talk about it later. How is your leg? And what did the doctor say?
- Adam: Thank God, I’m better now, but I’ll have to stay in the hospital for five days, and then stay in the house for almost a month. And I’ll have to walk using crutches for another month.
- Sheikh Bassem (smiling): I don’t mean to intrude, but we have to go to pray. We’ll be back.
- - Adam: I’ll be waiting.
- Adam: Sheikh Bassem has been my teacher since I was young.
- George: Oh, okay, but where did they go?
- Adam: They went to perform Duhr prayer.
- George: Today is Tuesday, what prayer is this?
- Adam: Being Muslims, we have to pray five times a day.
- George: Yes, I’ve learned that you’re a Muslim and it was quite a surprise! Why didn’t you tell me earlier?!
- Adam: I told you before that you do not connect different discussions together; my name and my discussions, and even my features show that I’m an Arab and a Muslim. Anyway I didn’t want to hide it from you, but you asked me whether I was catholic or protestant? I apologize if you felt that I wanted to hide that from you.
- George: No, it’s okay. Aren’t five prayers every day really difficult to perform?
- Adam: The prayers soothe us from the agonies of life; they don’t tire us at all.

- George: We are also comforted with a prayer every week, but I think five prayers daily would be really hard to keep up!
- Adam: As a matter of fact we get tired if we don't pray every day, and our prayers aren't hard at all. Even going to the mosque is not hard.
- George: Do you go to the mosque?
- Adam: If it is possible to go to the mosque, it is better, but you can pray anywhere. I myself will perform my prayers after a while on the chair.
- George: You will pray in this condition?
- Adam: Yes of course! Praying in this condition is even more important; I need God all the time and now I need him even more. The tests of life make one less able to withstand difficulties, so at such times it is easy to act against ones morals and forget one's principles.
- George: Truly, such principles make one tired.
- Adam: That's why we need prayer, to make man be patient and steadfast.
- George: I have sent you a message telling you that I'm interested in reading the holy Qur'an, but I don't know which translation to read.
- Adam: I hope you are able to understand Arabic, to enjoy reading it as we read it. Anyway, I'll give you a translated copy, after Sheikh Bassem returns.
- George: Is Islam only for Arabs?
- Adam: As a matter of fact the number of Muslims in non-Arab countries is more than those in the Arab ones, for Islam, as Allah says: [And we have sent you O Muhammad not but as a mercy for the Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).] (Al-Anbiya: 107)
- George: Mercy!
- Adam: Yes, mercy… if you study it and read it you'll find out how merciful it is, and that it's for all people!
- George: That's the same thing Katrina says when she talks about Catholicism.
- Adam: As you studied Catholicism… now study Islam. If you are not convinced after that, put it aside.
- George: Yes, I've decided to study it and I'll start with reading the Qur'an, but I'll analyze it critically.
- Adam: Very good, because Islam is a religion of knowledge and doesn't want you to believe without learning about it first. And that is the reason why the first of Allah's commands to his Prophet was: "Read".

- George: You seem confident with Islam. I met a Muslim from Egypt, and he said that he wished to be like us in the West, and advised me not to learn about Islam.
- Adam: Sure, you'll certainly meet some Muslims who say Islam is a religion of terror and is against development, but that is only a small percentage.
- George: Yes, he told me that too.
- Adam: And you'll also meet some Muslims who say that Islam is a religion that is against women.
- George: That's what that Muslim in Rome said.
- Adam: Isn't it possible that you might meet someone who criticizes mathematics, geometry, medicine or technology?
- George: Actually that happens a lot.
- Adam: Does this affect your understanding of these sciences or affect our need for them?
- George: Absolutely not, but here the case is different.
- Adam: No it isn't, I don't see any difference, only that there seems to be organized attacks against Islam, while there aren't such attacks against sciences.
- George: Ha ha - what do you mean by organized attacks?
- Adam: Do you remember that terroristic explosion in London which Muslims were accused of?
- George: Yes, and it was proved that it was not an act of terrorism.
- Adam: It was only proved after the media had talked about the so-called terrorism of Muslims for a long time, then the denial was very short, as usual. Do you know that I was suspended and imprisoned for that explosion? And the accusation was because of being a Muslim, which means that I'm automatically seen as a terrorist. Do you know that all evidence proved that Muslims were innocent, but the media had a ready-made accusation?
- George: But don't you see that it's because of the repeated actions of Muslims?
- Adam: In every society and religion there are extremists, but the difference here is that when the case is a criminal one, it is not connected to Muslims, but when it is terrorism it is connected with Muslims, don't you find this funny!
- George: You seem very confident about Islam.
- Adam: Let me be straight with you, what is stopping you from being a Muslim? And living happily?
- George: I didn't expect that question, but is being a Muslim as simple as that?

- Adam: Yes, I don't think you need the rituals of the church or other elaborate religious procedures; becoming a Muslim is easy but it is a completely new way of life.
- George: Do you think I might be a Muslim one day?
- Adam: Yes, and I believe you're very close to becoming one.
- George: Excuse me, but you don't know me well Adam. I can't adopt anything that my mind, logic or principles do not accept.
- Adam: No, excuse me. It's you who doesn't know Islam well!
- George: What do you mean?
- Adam: Entering Islam is easy, but you can't enter Islam before you are convinced by it, inwardly and totally - it isn't a matter of just saying 'I believe that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah' without believing it in your own heart. What is important is your heart, faith and what you believe inside you.
- George: Though I don't think that I'll be a Muslim any time, but who knows?
- Adam: Though I am convinced that one day you'll be a Muslim, I think that your path to Islam is through knowledge, that's why I think that you should study Islam well first, and then I feel you'll accept it because you believe in knowledge, logic and reason.
- George: I don't know whether you are saying that to flatter me or for Islam, or for both? But you remind me of that Muslim we met in Rome; he said something similar to Katrina before he gave her a copy of a book called: "My Great Love for Christ Led Me to Islam".
- Adam: Didn't you just tell me that this Muslim you met in Rome denied Islam?
- George: What is really strange is that this one was the brother of the first one I told you about; we met them both.
- Adam: And who is better, in your opinion?
- George: I'm not quite sure, the first one was older but the second one respected his father and mother more and they respected him, but I didn't bother to compare them.
- Adam: And did Katrina read the book?
- George: Yes, she read it twice and she was really moved by it.
- Adam: And did you read it?
- George: Yes, I read it too. Oh yes, you told me that you'd give me a translation

of the Qur’an today.

- Adam: Yes I shall when Sheikh Bassem comes. I expect that they are praying now. Please excuse me, I have to pray. If you have any questions about Islam, ask Sheikh Bassem, I’m only his student, and the copy of the Qur’an is a gift to you.
- George: I’ll wait until you finish your prayers and then leave.
- Adam: Alright.

Adam started his prayers while George was watching him, then Sheikh Bassem and his friends returned and George addressed him, saying:

- George: Adam told me that you’re a man of religion in Islam and he promised me that you’d give me a copy of a translated Qur’an.
- Sheikh Bassem: There are no men of religion in Islam, as Islam is for everybody. The copy is in the car outside, would you like to come with me and take it?
- George: Fine…. I’m late, I want to leave but let’s wait for Adam to finish his prayers, if it won’t take too long.
- Sheikh Bassem: Our prayer is like our religion; easy and full of happiness.
- George: Happiness?
- Sheikh Bassem: Yes, happiness in this life and the next. It’s strange that you’re a friend of Adam and yet he hasn’t talked to you about this, I will scold him if he hasn’t talked to you about this great religion when you are one of his friends. He won’t find a more valuable gift for you than talking to you about Islam. Look around you, don’t you see a lot of people being led astray, looking for what may guide them in this life but ignoring the religion of the last Prophet and Messenger?
- George: Maybe that’s why he gave me a copy of the Qur’an.

Adam finished his prayer, and then looked at George and Sheikh Bassem.

- Adam: Sheikh, don’t scold me, I told him that Islam makes one happy in this life and the next…

Bassem smiled, saying:

- Sheikh Bassem: George, we all feel a relief after each prayer because we give all our problems to Allah, the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful, the All-Generous, the All-Hearing and the All-Knowledgeable. Learn Islam, it’s the path to happiness.
- Adam: I wish you happiness in both this life and the next, just as Sheikh Bassem mentioned.
- George: I cannot simply change my religion until I learn it and become convinced after studying it with a critical eye, isn’t this what I’ve always done with all the

religions, Adam?

- Adam: Yes, and I want you to do the same thing with Islam. And although I sincerely hope you will become a Muslim, Islam teaches us to have knowledge first.
- Sheikh Bassem: You must learn first, and then you will have no excuse not to be a Muslim, my friend. Shall we go now?
- George: I don't understand why you are so sure that if I study Islam I would become a Muslim.
- Sheikh Bassem: Our confidence in Islam comes from God, who has sent the holy Qur'an.
- George: We'll see! I promise you to read the Qur'an and more about Islam, and then I'll discuss it with you and make my decision.
- Adam: Fine… that will be better.
- Adam: And don't forget to travel, just as you did earlier to get to know about other religions.
- George: Let's go now….. I'll start to read your holy book and will try to visit you tomorrow, as currently I'm unemployed.
- Adam: You surprised me when you said you had left your work, but it seems that you're in a hurry to explain now. If you don't come tomorrow, then we'll chat on the phone. May God be with you.

George returned home with a copy of the holy Qur'an. He didn't find Katrina in his house. He called her and she told him that she was on her way to the hospital to see Adam, and so he decided to start reading the holy Qur'an. He was surprised how Adam recommended this particular book while there were so many other books about Islam. After two hours of reading the Qur'an had passed, Katrina returned to the house.

- Katrina: Hello George, I've just come from visiting Adam.
- George: Thanks for visiting him.
- Katrina: But he is an odd individual.
- George: Why?
- Katrina: I don't know why; he and his other Muslim friends don't shake hands with women, but they apologized politely. Can this be considered a form of discrimination as in the Jewish and Christian religions?
- George: Maybe… I don't know, I've only just started reading about Islam two hours ago, and actually I've noticed that it is fair with women, and that it respects

and appreciates them.

- Katrina: Yes… I've read the translated copy. It's true, but the way they treated me just felt so strange.
- George: Why? Was there any disrespect or did they insult you?
- Katrina: No, they were very polite with me, but they didn't shake my hand and didn't look at me when I was talking.
- George: But you are so late, didn't you talk with them?
- Katrina: Yes, we did. We talked a lot, mainly about Islam. I don't know why they reminded me of some priests so much.
- George: Maybe it is because of his friend Bassem, who is a man of religion.
- Katrina: No, Bassem is not a man of religion and he refuses this title. He said that in Islam they don't have men of religion in the same way that Christians have Popes in Catholicism, but he is a scholar of Islam.
- George: Yes, you're right; he said the same thing to me. He is a well-mannered man and his smile shined. He gave me his card. Can you believe it, he wants me to become a Muslim! I'm surprised at how confident they were that I would enter Islam!?

Katrina then looked at the ceiling as if she was recalling something: All of them had great manners and performed acts of worship a lot but they weren't like priests; all of them worked for a living and they weren't devoted to just worshipping all the time, they even considered their work and studies as types of worship. They didn't separate life and work from worship, as our ordinary folks do. Adam even performed his prayers on his bed and had told her that Muslims pray everywhere, and that their religion is easy.

- Katrina: You know George, Adam prayed while I was there and told me they do their ritual prayers five times a day. He said that it brings them happiness, but although I wasn't convinced, they seemed to be very sure about that.
- George: Yes they're very sure, their speech is very moving; also their relationships with each other and their smiles are touching too.
- Katrina: You seem to like them!
- George: Liking is not the case; the case is that Muslims, the holy Qur'an and Islam is a truly different system and also their nature is different from what we are used to.
- Katrina: Please explain more, as I had the same feeling when I started to read their

holy book, the Qur’an, but I couldn’t explain it totally – it was a strange feeling I had inside me, especially on subjects like: the Oneness of God, praising Him, His names and characteristics, and also the stories of the prophets, especially Jesus Christ and the virgin Mary, and even when it talked about morals and manners.

- George: I have the same feeling, but I will not judge it now, it would be too quick a judgment. Things will be clearer with time when we’ll know this religion better, its points of weakness and deficiencies, and its contradictions. And the situation of the backward Muslim dictators is the strongest proof of such points.
- George: Though I like Adam, I don’t have any desire to know about Islam more, but I’ll fight myself to know more. I did enjoy reading the Qur’an, though.
- Katrina: Reading their holy book gives me a really strange feeling.
- George: Good news…..I resigned today. O how I hate Kach the liar. I learned that he had delayed my promotion and had assigned me to go to Sweden instead, so I resigned in a way that if they don’t answer me, my resignation would be final.
- Katrina: Then your principles won again.
- George: Maybe, but what encouraged me to do that was Kach’s reaction to the decision of the board of directors, and my hope of being viewed in a good way by the board of directors. Anyway, I’ll raise my complaint to the worker’s union if they didn’t respond to the letter well.
- Katrina: I’m still wrestling between my principles and work. I used to cover my doubts and flee from them, but it’s you who insisted on uncovering them.
- George: Since the time we married, I’ve not seen you change so quickly as you have done in the last month, after coming back from Tel Aviv!
- Katrina: Change is not always totally bad and not always totally good, but I hope it is for the better.
- George (laughing): Ha ha ha, and is there anything better than Catholicism?
- Katrina: My faith in Jesus is great, as is my faith in Catholicism. And I don’t think there is anything better, but who knows?
- George (laughing): Ha ha ha…. I want to sleep early tonight; I’ll just check the e-mails quickly.

George opened his account and found some replies to his messages. He replied briefly and then sent them back to everyone. He found that most of them agreed with his decision.

“Janolka: Principles always come first for those who are brave, but it sometimes comes with problems too.”

“Levvi: The correct view is that principles are more important, but we’re not always able to keep to this as we are weak due to the pressures of life.”

“Habib: We have to prioritize principles; otherwise we would live in a jungle.”

“Katrina: It is necessary to put principles first, but it’s a tough decision.”

“I’m still waiting concerning my former message about the Holy Qur’an,

George”

He continued reading his e-mails and he found a message from Janolka…

“My dear friend, George…

Even though our time together wasn’t long, I found many resemblances and possibly similarities in both our ways of thinking. There is something I would like to ask you about, which you may find strange.

After you left I read the book that the Muslim had given to your wife; I read it on the internet, then I met a Muslim construction engineer who asked me to read a translation of the Qur’an first, so I read it and in fact I have finished it more than once; then we met again and spent some time discussing things. And I don’t know what kind of magic is in that holy book! I asked him about a few points in Islam, but he said that he was only an engineer, so I asked him how I could learn more about Islam. He told me that he knows no one in Italy, but if I wished to know more about Islam there were two ways I could follow: either to read and see about it in the media, which is mostly broadcasted by those who hate Islam, or to find a sheikh in Italy who knows about Islam and learn from him. So I chose both ways, and now I have been reading about five hours every day about Islam since you left, and I’m willing to go to Egypt or Libya. Do you have any advice?

My greetings to you and Katrina,

Janolka”

So he replied …

“My friend Janolka,

I’ve read your message and I’m fond of your bravery; it seems the changes you’ve been through since our last meeting are more than I expected. I encourage you to follow both ways and I’m waiting for you to tell me what you’ve learned as I really learn much from you and your critical mind. Regards,

George.”

(3)

George woke up and found that Katrina had set the breakfast table. They sat down to have their breakfast.

- George: I don't have work today and I don't know what to do.
- Katrina: It's better for you to go to work. I think your resignation hasn't been accepted or refused yet, and your absence will be against you in the work union.
-
- George: I didn't think about it that way, but you're right.
- Katrina: Your problem is over, but mine is not yet. I'll try to resolve it today.
- George: Resolve it?!… How and why?
- Katrina: I'm not sure how, but I'll go to work and try to resolve the problem.
- George: I sent you an email yesterday about what I received on the conflict between principles and interests. Read it, it might be useful in making your decision.
- Katrina: I'll read it before I take my decision; I'll go now because I'm late.
- George: Me too, I'll go now.

George went to work and entered his office. As soon as he had sat down William, the manager of public affairs, entered angrily:

- William: What have you done?
- George: Nothing, what happened?
- William: After you left yesterday, Kach called me angrily. I've never seen him this way before. He asked me where you got the emails of the board of directors from. I told him that I didn't know.
- George: Why didn't you tell him you gave them to me?
- William: He might harm me because of it! You know him, he doesn't think of anyone or anything but his own best interests.
- George: That's how all of us are, we're afraid of one another... I won't tell him it was you, so relax, but do you know why he was angry.
- William: It seems that the board of directors called him and requested to hold an urgent meeting in the next three days, based on a letter they received from you.
- George: A meeting, why?
- William: I don't know. All I can figure out is that it has something to do with you; that's why I asked you what you wrote in your message.
- George: So the situation is encouraging, I didn't expect that.
- William: Encouraging! What's encouraging?

- George: Nothing.. I sent them my resignation. Anyway, no-one will know that it was you who gave me those email addresses.
- William: Thank you… excuse me.

George sat thinking about his next step, because he knew how cunning Kach was and how he might use his cunning to affect the board of directors during the meeting, as he didn't really want to leave the company. Should he request to attend the meeting of the board of directors or should he present a full detailed file, or what should he do? It was strange that no one had answered his e-mail yet! This meant that they would listen to Kach first, which he definitely didn't want! He thought for a while, and then he decided to write another letter to the board of directors which said:

"Gentlemen, members of the board of directors:

It has been my pleasure to work in the company for more than fourteen years and it has been an honor to have gained your trust. The success of this company is my mission, and I want to thank you for encouraging me in a way that helped me to accomplish what I've been able to do for this company.

As you are aware I sent you my resignation yesterday, but I haven't received any response from you yet. Does this mean you have accepted my resignation or does it mean I will continue in my job? I hope the board of directors will discuss the matter with me directly.

Best regards,

George."

He wished that by this letter he would be requested to a meeting to uncover the matter to the board, but as soon as he had sent the letter he received a call. It was Kach….

- Kach: All this for principles! Is it possible for you to come to my office now?
- George: Yes, because of my principles, but I won't change my principles.
- Kach: Can you come to my office?
- George: I'll come.

George entered and saw that Kach was angry. He said:

- Kach: What is it that you exactly want, George?
- George: I want to stick to my principles.
- Kach: It seems as if you want to be the president of the company!!
- George: No Kach, I'm not doing this for any position, though if it happens it's

because I deserve it.

- Kach: Then the case is not principles but is position.
- George: Take it as you may, but I'll not change my principles and I only came because you told me we'd talk and agree. Trust me, Kach, I won't give up my principles.
- Kach: If it's principles as you say, I have another offer for you.
- George: What is it?
- Kach: I'll go to Sweden, on the condition that you leave London.
- George: Why?!
- Kach: It's related to me personally, I don't want to be away from the company now. If the board of directors meet while you're in London, they might make the decision to promote me, as they would say, and so force me out of the company. That's why I convinced them that it was important for you to travel to Sweden. He then smiled and said: Due to your principles I'll travel myself, but you have to be outside London at the same time so that the decision will be delayed.
- George: Where shall I go?
- Kach: Anywhere you like, we have business in Germany, Ukraine and in Egypt.
- George: And if I refuse?
- Kach: Then it's obvious that it's a matter of position, and not principles! In such a case, things will take a different route.
- George: I'll think about it and answer you tomorrow.
- Kach: Give your answer to me, and not the board of directors.
- George: I promise you…

George left the company, and while he was on his way he called Dr. Tom…

- George: Can I see you?
- Tom: Yes.
- George: I'll be there in thirty minutes, I'm on my way.

George reached Dr. Tom's clinic, where he found a new receptionist who welcomed him.

- The receptionist: Dr. Tom is waiting for you.
- Tom: Hello, George… You're the first patient I've had since opening the clinic. I've just started today and all my appointments start from tomorrow.
- George: Good news. I'm sorry I didn't ask you about your problem, is the problem with Brad over?

- Tom: Yes, thank God it is.
- George: Where did he go?
- Tom: To prison, he was caught selling drugs.
- George: How I hate Brad!
- Tom: And why do you hate him, surely you have no quandary with him?
- George: He is a person who has no morals, and when one loses his morals he becomes like an animal, or even worse!
- Tom: How hard the experience of life is; I had two choices: first to leave my principles and all my problems would be settled, or second to stand firm to my principles and encounter a hard test. I chose to stick to my guns and I almost lost everything, but I was convinced that to stand firm to my principles would definitely lead to a good end, and that's exactly what happened.
- George: It's as if you know what I came for!
- Tom: Not really, what is it?

George told him the story about Kach until he reached the point of traveling, when he started hesitating…

- George: I want your opinion: Do you think that if I travel but don't carry out his conditions to bribe the company, I would be compromising my principles?
- Tom: I don't understand! How would you be compromising your principles? You're only traveling to another job.
- George: But I'll make Kach fulfill his evil aim.
- Tom: Then maybe you would expose his tricks to the board of directors.
- George: Then, you think I should travel?
- Tom: Yes, and to Egypt.
- George: Why?
- Tom: Didn't we agree that you have to study Islam. You have the chance now. I would have liked to have gone with you but I have just opened the clinic again.
- George: I don't want to travel, I've travelled a lot lately; if I travel I would prefer to go to Germany.
- Tom: It's up to you, but I think that your trip is important; you will see Muslims in their own country and will learn their behavior and practices.
- George: I'll think about it. Anyway you're the first one I asked for advice. I'll think about it and tell you what I decide… excuse me, today you're busy with your clinic and you deserve to be as you stood firm to your principles. Excuse me.

On his way he called Adam. He told him that he wanted to see him, but Adam apologized because he said that the doctor wanted to perform some tests and that he was waiting for him in the evening, so he headed to his house and decided to continue reading the holy book, the "Qur'an"…

While he was reading, his children, Michael and Sally, entered:

- George: Father, you're home early today?
- George: Yes, there were some matters at work that made me come early.
- Sally and Michael: What are you reading, father?
- George: I'm reading a book which is known as the book of the Muslims.
- Sally and Michael: The Muslims who are called terrorists?
- Tom: Yes.
- Michael: In our school there is a Muslim boy from India. He is a little bit lazy, but he is kind and not a terrorist.
- George: Son, terrorism has no religion, don't say what others say. You should treat people according to their manners.
- Michael: But although he is kind, I feel that he tends to stay by himself.
- George: Why?
- Michael: I don't know! Maybe because they say he is a terrorist or because some pupils laugh at the way he looks.
- George: Who does that?
- Michael: I don't like that, but some pupils do that.
- George: Son, it's the manners and morals of people that makes one respect or disrespect others.
- Michael: Those are the same words as Iqbal.
- George: Who is Iqbal?
- Michael: My Muslim friend from India that I told you about.
- George: Yes, the Qur'an says: [O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (i.e. one of the pious) Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.] (Al-Hujurat: 13) So there is no difference between one person or another due to their color or nationality, except for their righteousness.
- Michael: Isn't Islam only for Arabs? I was surprised when I found out that Iqbal was a Muslim.

- George: The number of Muslims is over a billion and a half, spread all around the world from China to USA. And what's strange is that 80% of the Muslims are not from the Arab world.
- Michael: I wish we had such equality.
- George: Why?
- Michael: Some pupils laugh at him because he is from India and not English, because of the way he looks and because of his Mum.
- George: That's forbidden son. You can tell your teacher about it.
- Michael: I'll tell her, but I know that they won't stop except in front of the teacher.
- George murmured to himself while the children left: "Even Sally understands the difference between the whole moral system and fake morals."

George continued reading until Katrina came home.

- Katrina: What a long day!
- George: Please, one moment.
- Katrina: What are you reading?
- George: I'm reading the book of the Muslims, can you wait for a while, I'm busy right now?
- Katrina: Where have you reached?
- George: I haven't finished yet.
- Katrina: Wow! You seem so interested.
- George: Listen what God says in the Holy Qur'an: [Alif-Lam-Ra. These are the Verses of the Book, and a plain Quran. Perhaps (often) will those who disbelieve wish that they were Muslims [those who have submitted themselves to Allah's Will in Islam; Islamic Monotheism, this will be on the Day of Resurrection]. Leave them to eat and enjoy, and let them be preoccupied with (false) hope. They will come to know!] (Al-Hijr: 1 – 3)
- Katrina: Why did you choose this verse?
- George: I don't know why, but there are some parts that seem to be addressed to me, especially that part.
- Katrina: And what are the exact parts that seem to be addressed to you?
- George: A clear book that guides us. Disbelievers wish they could have been Muslims…. Disbelievers are distracted by food and play. I don't know why it feels as if all of that is addressed to me.
- Katrina: Do you mean you would like to be a Muslim?

- George: You're dreaming, that's not possible… but I want to find answers to my questions, and to find the path to happiness, and not be distracted by food or drink. I don't know why I feel that this part in particular is addressing me personally?
- Katrina: Is it possible that Islam is the way and path to happiness?!
- George: Ha ha ha, just as Adam said. Although I don't think that is the case, I'll answer that point scientifically, as I've always done with all the religions, not just by guessing or only according to what I feel.
- Katrina: By the way, how is Adam?
- George: You saw him after me. I didn't visit him today; many new issues occurred at my work.
- Katrina: What happened?!
- George: Kach offered me to go to Germany, and I won't have to compromise my principles there.
- Katrina: Have you agreed? Is the problem over then?
- George: No, I told him I would think about it, because I actually don't want to travel now.
- Katrina: Then it's now a matter of personal opinion, and not principles?
- George: That's what Kach told me…. but in fact another reason for travelling appeared as I asked Tom's advice and he had another opinion.
- Katrina: And what's Tom's opinion?
- George: He advised me to go to Egypt.
- Katrina: You told me Germany?
- George: Kach gave me some options: Germany, Ukraine or Egypt. I wished to go to Germany, but Tom advised me to go to Egypt.
- Katrina: In order to search for answers to your questions?
- George: Yes, but I don't want to go to an underdeveloped country like Egypt instead of going to a strong country like Germany.
- Katrina: But Egypt, even though it is a Muslim country, is also the country of Copts and is the land of the Pyramids and the Nile.
- George: It sounds like you know Egypt quite well!
- Katrina: Yes, Egypt is the land of the Coptic Orthodox Church and is a land of one of the wonders in the world - the pyramids - and also the country with the longest river in the world - the Nile. I knew an orthodox Copt and he used to always criticize my Catholicism, just like we criticize your Protestantism.

- George: Because you split from them, just as Protestants split from Catholics. Should I understand from what you are saying that you also want me to go to Egypt instead of Germany?
- Katrina: Maybe, but it’s up to you. I like countries with ancient civilizations and maybe you like developed countries, even though you were very comfortable in India.
- George: I’ll think it over. But it seems that you are the one who likes the idea of me traveling.
- Katrina: Though I’d rather we were together and had some time to rest together after your successive trips; but not sticking to one’s principles or compromising them would make the person lose themself, and on the other hand if you stuck to your principles, you might lose your job. So maybe this would be a good way to get over this problem.
- George: Yes, that would be the best way to get out of the problem. Anyway, I have time to think it over. Is there anything new concerning your problem?
- Katrina: Yes and I think that it’s almost over.
- George: Over? What is over?
- Katrina: I think this is the last month I’ll work for them.
- George: And after that, then what?
- Katrina: I’ve made arrangements to apply for another job. Don’t worry yourself thinking about it, I’ll tell you about it as soon as I hear anything. And now let me prepare the meal for Michael and Sally.

(4)

In the evening George went to visit Adam. He entered his hospital room and found Adam talking to Sheikh Bassem and laughing…

- George: How are you doing? You look as though you are in a good mood today.
- Sheikh Bassem: Thanks be to Allah. I’m always happy, and I’m happier today because of you and my brother Adam. How are you?
- George: I’m fine. How are you, Adam?
- Adam: I’m okay, thanks be to Allah.
- George: I came to see how you are, and ask you for advice!
- Adam: Go ahead.
- George: It won’t take long. I had to choose between my principles and my work,

and after a hard time deciding I eventually chose my principles. After that things became easier, but now I have to go on an urgent trip.

- Adam: All those who have stood by their principles have won in the end, even though they thought they might lose at any particular point.

Bassem smiled, saying:

- Sheikh Bassem: Allow me to add. Haven't you read in the Qur'an how the prophets won by patiently sticking to their principles?
- George: I read in your book details of how all the prophets won. Even Jesus won and wasn't killed, whereas in our religion he was sacrificed for the sake of mankind.

Bassem smiled:

- Sheikh Bassem: Ha ha ha, then Islam appreciates Jesus (peace be upon him) and loves him more than you do.
- George: But it doesn't describe him as having supernatural powers, or explain how kind he was and how he saved mankind, as we do.
- Sheikh Bassem: On the contrary, Islam gave him more than that. It seems a though you haven't read the holy Qur'an as he is mentioned in more than one place. Didn't you read the story of Jesus in the Qur'an?
- George: I only got the translation yesterday, but I have read most of it already and I have read the story of Jesus.
- Sheikh Bassem: Then I expect you have read his words as related by God in the chapter of Mary: ["And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Salât (prayer), and Zakât, as long as I live."] (Mariam: 31) And also the words: ["And Salâm (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!"] (Mariam: 33) And God says: [And will make him a messenger to the children of Israel (saying): "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I design for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's Leave; and I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I bring the dead to life by Allah's Leave. And I inform you of what you eat, and what you store in your houses. Surely, therein is a sign for you, if you believe."] (Al-Imran: 49)
- George: Yes, I've read all that you have mentioned, but what amazes me is how you respect Christianity!
- Sheikh Bassem: Do you want the truth?

- George: Yes, Of course.
- Sheikh Bassem: You don’t believe in Jesus as much as we do.
- George: How?
- Sheikh Bassem: You believe he was crucified and we believe he was raised up to God. Haven’t you read: [And because of their saying (in boast): “We killed Messiah ‘Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the messenger of Allah,” - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of ‘Tesa (Jesus) was put over another man (and they killed that man), and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely they killed him not (i.e. ‘Iesa (Jesus)).] (Al-Nisa: 157)
- George: Yes.
- Sheikh Bassem: You, or at least some of you, believe that the Virgin Mary committed an action of adultery, God forbid.
- George: And you, who do you think is the father of Jesus?
- Sheikh Bassem: He has no father, as just as Allah created Adam from no father or mother, He created Jesus from a mother without a father. That’s why he spoke in his cradle to defend his mother.
- Sheikh Bassem: We respect all heavenly religions, starting with the father of mankind, Adam, peace be upon him, as well as all the prophets that came calling others to the same and one thing; that is the Oneness of God, and each prophet came with the good news of the coming prophet. Haven’t you read in the translation: [And (remember) when ‘Ieasa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: “O children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Torah (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.” But when he (Ahmad i.e. Muhammad) came to them with clear proofs, they said: “This is plain magic.”] (Al-Saf: 6) Isn’t that written in your books?
- George: No I haven’t read what you’ve just mentioned, or maybe it’s in the part that I haven’t read yet, or it is only mentioned in some of our books.
- Sheikh Bassem: The problem is that the Bible has been interpolated and rewritten in different forms, especially when the Jews were persecuting the Christians.
- George: I think this problem has happened in all the holy books; there isn’t a book that hasn’t been rewritten.
- Sheikh Bassem: But all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, agree that the

holy Qur'an hasn't been rewritten, and what is more is that there is not a more accurate book which has been transmitted from one to another than the Qur'an. It has been transferred by thousands of men, but you will not find even a single letter which is different in any copy, and even what's even smaller than a letter.

- George: And what is even smaller than a letter?!
- Sheikh Bassem: In Arabic we have diacritic marks which determine how any letter is pronounced. And all scholars agree about how each letter is pronounced in the Qur'an, and they even agree on the characteristics each letter should have, eg. if it is lengthened or partially hidden etc.
- George: Aren't there any differences between the copies?
- Sheikh Bassem: Not at all. There are different ways of reading some words but this is only due to the different Arabic dialects.
- George: You mean there might be a version where Jesus is killed and in another one he sacrificed himself?
- Sheikh Bassem: Of course not! The Qur'an is the same, there cannot be different copies. What I'm referring to is the different dialects with which the Holy Qur'an is read, although the actual recitation usually has exactly the same meaning and the same words.
- George: To this degree? I think you are exaggerating!
- Sheikh Bassem: You can read for yourself what your historians have said, and you'll find it is as exactly as what I've told you.
- George: But…..don't you think you are exaggerating?
- Sheikh Bassem: Maybe, but Adam told me that you have been looking for answers to your questions for a while now, and that you have studied all religions to get to know them, and now you've finally reached Islam. And he told me you like following scientific methods and relying on facts.

Adam sat upright, and asked George:

- Adam: A good discussion, but I apologize for my intrusion… what is it that you wanted to ask about, George?
- George: You've made me forget my question, Bassem.
- Sheikh Bassem: I apologize for that.
- George: Anyhow, after I stood by my principles I came to two choices; to travel in a way that doesn't contradict my principles, or otherwise leave my work. And now I think I might travel, but right now I am tired of traveling.

- Adam: You're always traveling!
- George: Yes it's true, and I don't want to travel, but it seems it is the only way out of this current predicament I have at my work.
- Adam: Putting up with the fatigue of the body is easier than not living up to one's principles, because if you don't live up to your principles your soul will become tired. Where are you going this time?
- George: To Germany, Ukraine or possibly somewhere else.
- Adam: I wished it would have been to a Muslim country, as just as you've traveled to know about Judaism and then about Christianity, I had hope you would travel to know more about Islam.
- George: The countries are Germany, Ukraine or Egypt.

Adam looked to the ground and said:

- Adam: Ah, how I long to go to Egypt. Both Sheikh Bassem and I are from Egypt. I believe you would know more about Islam if you visit Egypt.
- George: Are you an Egyptian?
- Adam: Yes. I think I told you that before.
- George: Maybe, I don't remember.
- Adam: If you visit Egypt I'll call some of my friends to meet you and take you on a tour.

Bassem then said with a happy voice:

- Sheikh Bassem: My brother is a mathematics teacher in Cairo, he can arrange everything you need.
- George: Despite really wanting to go to Germany, I find everyone is advising me to go to Egypt.
- Sheikh Bassem: Then I'll wait for you to let me know your decision so I can call my brother.
- Adam: I wish I could travel with you. I miss Egypt and Egyptians as it's been nearly two years since I was there last.
- George: Then why don't you come with me?
- Adam: I'll leave the hospital the day after tomorrow, and then my university exams will be in three weeks.
- George: Never mind. It's enough that you are alright. What shall I bring from Egypt for you and Bassem?
- Adam (laughing): Ha ha ha, bring me all of Egypt.

- George (laughing): Ha ha ha ha.

In the evening George opened his email. He found the replies from his friends about the Qur'an…

"Levvi: I'm not quite sure. I've only read some parts as I didn't have enough time."

"Habib: It's more accurate than other heavenly books."

"Tom: I apologize… I was busy in the clinic and haven't read a lot of the holy book of the Muslims, but I shall read it."

"Katrina: It has really been sent by God."

"Janolka: It has been proven worldwide that the Qur'an was transferred through Muhammad, and that it has no falsifications and has not been changed. And he who believes in Muhammad must believe that the Qur'an has been sent by God."

What surprised George was that Janolka sealed his message with his name and then Tripoli-Libya. He then opened a new window for another message and wrote to all of them….

"The eighth discussion point: I would like to know Islam better and I may travel to Egypt for some urgent business, so who can help me with:

1- Titles of books from which I can obtain better knowledge of Islam and Egypt.
2- Points for me to discuss and raise.
3- Replies for me to deliver.

I'll wait for your replies in two or three days, and I'll summarize the replies later and send them back as usual,

George."

The Theft

15

The Theft

The Theft

(1)

- George: Kach, I'm ready to travel only to make you realize that the issue is a matter of principle, and not personal interest.
- Kach: Good, but I have one condition!
- George: Condition! What?
- Kach: That you send a message to the board of directors to tell them you changed your mind about the resignation, and that you've accepted to travel.
- George: Why?
- Kach: To calm the storm you created.
- George: Okay fine; then I agree, but when shall I travel?
- Kach: As soon as we book the ticket, but where do you want to fly to?
- George: Egypt.
- Kach (laughing): You seem to still be searching for the path to happiness. The director of public relations at the Reservation Department will meet you soon - and then go and find your happiness.
- George: Thanks.

George headed to his office. A few minutes later - less than ten minutes - the director of public relations came to him.

- The director of public relations: I've booked a ticket for you to fly to Egypt the day after tomorrow. Will that suit you?
- George: What's the rush?
- The director of public relations: I don't know! This is upon Kach's request, and I'm very happy with this since it means that you'll continue working with us.
- George: And who told you otherwise?
- The director of public relations: There's a strong rumor among the staff that Kach wants to fire you from your job.
- George: Perhaps I was afraid of that before, but now I get the feeling that if one of us were to fire the other, it would be me who would fire him. But thank you for your comments.
- The director of public relations: Kach told me to remind you about the email.

- George: He’s started to be scared of me, but he shouldn’t worry. I’ll send the email shortly.
- The director of public relations: The documents and the information will be sent to your email today, as they haven’t been processed yet since we were surprised by the news.
- George: Okay, I’ll be waiting for them. Thanks.
- The director of public relations: My advice to you as a friend is to be cautious about Kach. But in terms of my work, I’ve told you about the ticket and the paperwork, now please excuse me.
- George: Thank you, but believe me, morals and principles overcome cunning and deception.

George grabbed his phone and contacted Adam to inform him of his trip.

- George: Hello, O Egyptian friend! I’ve booked a seat on a flight to your country.
- Adam: Did you? Congratulations! What good news, I’ll tell Sheikh Bassem to speak to his brother for him to meet you because he speaks English, unlike my brother. When will you travel?
- George: The day after tomorrow. It seems that it was arranged sooner than expected.
- Adam: Can you come to me today? I’m alone in the hospital.
- George: If it’s okay I’ll come in a little while. I’m getting ready to leave now.
- Adam: That’s fine. I’ll be expecting you.

George arrived at the hospital and saw Adam on his bed reading.

- George: Hello Adam! You seem engrossed in reading. What have you got there?
- Adam: The book of God; the holy Qur’an.
- George: Haven’t you read it before?
- Adam: Yes I have - many times, as a matter of fact - but I love to recite it every day.
- George: Every day! Don’t you get bored of it?
- Adam: No, never! We read it every day, and we really enjoy reading it. Just as the miracle of Jesus (peace be upon him) was that he healed the blind and the leper by God’s Leave, the miracle of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is this immortal Qur’an.
- George: What do you mean by ‘immortal’?
- Adam: I mean that God has given a pledge to keep it secure forever. Haven’t you

read the interpretation of the meaning of the following verse: [Verily We: It is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Quran) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption).] (Al-Higr: 9)? Tell me honestly; don’t you feel the miraculous nature of the Qur’an while you read the interpretation of its meaning?

- George: To be honest, while I was reading the interpretation of the meaning of the Qur’an, I wished I had the ability to read the original script, and not just the translation. And although I read only the translation, it mentions many topics which I feel are being addressed personally to me.
- Adam: I know the topics that address you most of all.
- George: How do you know?
- Adam: The Oneness of God, His names, attributes, majesty and His beauty remain the greatest thing that deeply move any human being, and I don’t need to know the unseen to say that.
- George: Yes, you’re right. In addition to that, since Islam is complete it deals with this life and the Hereafter, and its unique spirituality impresses me as well.
- Adam: Islam enables one to live their life fully; there’s no monasticism or living far from God in Islam. On the contrary, it makes the whole life a form of worship of God if you have the correct intention.
- George: But please, I’m traveling to Cairo the day after tomorrow, what do you advise me to do?
- Adam (laughing): Drink from the river Nile.
- George: Is drinking from the Nile a form of worship in Islam?
- Adam (laughing): No, I was just kidding. We say in Egypt that whoever drinks from the Nile would certainly return to it, because the country and its people are so beautiful.
- George: It seems that Egypt is the country you love the most!
- Adam: Oh, definitely. I love Egypt very much, and I really wish to return to it, but I love Mecca and Medina even more.
- George: Amazing! Why?
- Adam: They are the cities where our beloved Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived.
- George: Do you believe that your prophet is your savior, as we believe that Jesus is our savior?
- Adam: The concept of salvation does not exist in the Islamic faith at all. Jesus

(peace be upon him) is a prophet and Muhammad (peace be on him) is also a prophet, and we are not supposed to differentiate between any of them with regards to our belief in them. We believe in all of the prophets, and whoever slanders or disrespects any prophet is considered as an unbeliever in Islam.

- George: Even if the person slandered Moses, the prophet of the Jews, or Jesus, the Christians' prophet?
- Adam: Yes, didn't you read in the Qu'ran the following verse: [Say, (O Muslims), "We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and to Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)], and that which has been given to Musa (Moses) and 'Iesa (Jesus), and that which has been given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted (in Islam)"] (Al-Baqarah: 136)?
- George: I have read it and in fact this is one of the things that impressed me in the Qur'an the most. You appreciate Moses, Jesus, Lot and Adam more than their own followers. You have made me remember two things: the book that the Egyptian man gave to Katrina: "My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam" which was written by a Venezuelan writer, and the prophets in the Old Testament.
- Adam: Well, God has sent all prophets with the religion of monotheism and with the message to worship Him alone, but interpolations were made and so polytheism entered some religions.
- George: Excuse me, but you can't teach us our religion; you don't know more about Judaism than the Jews themselves, or more about Christianity than the Christians!
- Adam: You're right; maybe the Jews know their religion better than me, and the Christians know their religion better than me too, but it's impossible, both according to reason and the rules of the religion, that there could be any other deity with God!
- George: How?
- Adam: The rational proof of which I'm speaking is mentioned in the following verse: God says: [Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) gods besides Allah, then verily both would have been ruined. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!] (Al-Anbiya: 22). So if the universe had two or more arrangers or gods, it would have become in

disorder and its foundations would have been damaged, because the partners may have different opinions which could be incompatible with each other. And if one of them wanted to arrange a matter while the other one didn't want it like that, then it would be impossible to fulfill what they both wanted simultaneously. At the same time, if one of them achieved his desire, this would demonstrate that the other one was unable to do what he wanted. What's more, saying that all the gods could agree on the same thing all of the time is impossible. Hence, there has to be only one omnipotent God, whose wishes are the only things that are achieved, and whom nothing can stop or compete with; He is Allah, the One, the Prevailing. God has mentioned another proof about the impossibility of associating anything with Him in the Qur'an. He says: [No son (or offspring or children) did Allah beget, nor is there any ilah (god) along with Him; (if there had been many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have tried to overcome others! Glorified be Allah above all that they attribute to Him!] (Al-Mu'minun: 91)

- George: That's wonderful philosophical logic, though it is contrary to Christianity and invalidates it completely!
- Adam: It's not philosophical it is divine, actually. Besides, it doesn't invalidate Christianity, but it invalidates paganism and polytheism, because Jesus (peace be upon him) came preaching pure monotheism. Let me ask you what Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) asked his two companions in the prison, as it is stated in the Qur'an: [O [my] two companions of the prison! Are many different lords (gods) better or Allah, the One, the Irresistible? You do not worship besides Him but only names which you have named (forged), you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. The command (or the judgment) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him (i.e. His Monotheism), that is the (true) straight religion, but most men know not] (Yusuf: 39-40). Tell me, which is better – different separate lords, or Allah alone?!
- George: How can you say that Allah has sent down no authority to worship others beside Him, while the divinity of Jesus is repeated often in the New Testament!?
- Adam: Although you have deviated from the question, we'll continue our discussion. You know more than me that the New Testament is full of distortions, and you know more than me that some copies of the New Testament have mentioned the monotheism of God. I don't know how, even according to logic, there could

be two gods; as perhaps they will clash or disagree with each other, so the heavens and earth would have been ruined, as God says in the Qur'an: [Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) gods besides Allah, then verily both would have been ruined. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!] (Al-Anbiyaa: 22), or they would have had disagreements, as God says: [No son (or offspring or children) did Allah beget, nor is there any ilah (god) along with Him; (if there had been many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have tried to overcome others! Glorified be Allah above all that they attribute to Him!] (Al-Muminun: 91)

- George: This is a very major topic. I really hate the pictures and the idols that we find in the Catholic churches, and I feel it's a kind of paganism which reminds me of idol worship. Anyway, I haven't come to discuss that with you!
- Adam: There is nothing as endearing in Islam as the beauty of monotheism and the tranquility, happiness and security it provides.
- George: The tranquility, happiness and security it provides!
- Adam: Yes, believe me! Because associating others with God makes one's heart feel heavy and confused. Haven't you read the translation of the meaning of the following verses: [It is those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah and worship none but Him Alone) and confuse not their belief with Zulm (wrong i.e. by worshipping others besides Allah), for them (only) there is security and they are the guided] (Al-Anam:82), [Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism), and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah, Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest] (Al-Rad: 28), and [But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Quran nor acts on its orders, etc.) verily, for him is a life of hardship, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection] (Taha: 124). But, I know you didn't come to see me about this! I apologize; I may have gone on a bit, but you asked me.
- George: Before we end this discussion I want to ask you a question that frequently comes to my mind when I read the Qur'an. You mentioned in the last verse you cited that God threatened to gather some people on the Day of Resurrection blind. Isn't this a sadistic act for God to do?!
- Adam: Exalted and high is Allah above doing anything sadistic! He is described as the 'Owner of Majesty and Honor' many times in the Qur'an. He is the Most

Generous, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, the Pardoner, the Forgiver, the Munificent and the Appreciative, and all the most beautiful names belong to Him, Exalted is He. He is also described with the qualities of majesty, power and competence, as God is high above all. He says: [Blessed be the name of your Lord, the Owner of Majesty and Honor] (Al-Rahman: 78).

- George: Maybe this has come to my mind because of what I remember of the commandments of God in the Old Testament concerning murder, robbery and cruelty.
- Adam: Yes, this could be a reason, and I can add another reason. The Christians are accustomed to the idea of salvation, which means that there is no fire on the Resurrection Day, except for the poor who cannot afford to pay to be forgiven.
- While he was trying to defend his point of view, George said:
- George: We Protestants don’t believe in paying for forgiveness, as the Catholics and Orthodox do, though we all have the idea of salvation.
- Adam: As you said, the idea and the belief of salvation and all its implications mean that everyone will survive because the Christ (peace be upon him) has redeemed them. But this would then mean that there is no reason for or benefit achieved from having a Day of Resurrection. This in turn means that your good deeds will not be considered as worship, because whether you did good or not, the Christ (peace be upon him) has already saved you. Don’t you see that this is a kind of reward that encourages people to not be careful to obey God and to not want to live according to their principles instead of their personal interests?
- George: Perhaps! Speaking of principles, you reminded me of Kach and work. As I’ve already mentioned, I’ll be traveling the day after tomorrow to Cairo, so what do you suggest I do?
- Adam: I’m expecting Sheikh Bassem to arrive any minute now because I called him after you called me to tell him you were travelling to Egypt. He told me that he’d join us in about an hour, and I think he is about to arrive. His brother will meet you there and he wants to know all the arrangements you want him to make for you before you travel. Consider that we are all at your service.
- George laughed and said: Why?
- Adam: Excuse me, I don’t understand!
- George: You don’t need to do this for me. What do you get from me in return?! Pardon me for asking, but this question comes to my mind a lot.

- Adam: You're my friend, that's why I am helping you, and Sheikh Bassem is helping you as a favor to me because you're my friend. And there's another reason that I'd like to keep to myself.
- George: But I'd really like to know the other reason!
- Adam: Honestly, I hope you'll embrace Islam. In our religion it's known that if a Muslim brings another person to the happiness of believing in the One God, that it's one of the best acts of worship towards God.
- George: Sorry Adam, despite you being so eager, I think I'll never convert to Islam, so I suggest that you don't bother yourselves with introducing Islam to me or helping me.
- Adam: Don't worry, we are rewarded as soon as we exert any effort, even if you don't convert to Islam. And I am helping you as a friend, and I'll have my reward from God for that as well. Serving people and helping them are one of the best acts of worship towards God, though whoever God wants to guide, He expands his breast to open it to Islam. I have a strong feeling that you will convert to Islam. You are intelligent and logical.
- George: Maybe, but I don't think so. And I hope this doesn't bother you, but why has your manner of speaking changed from how you used to speak?
- Adam: What do you mean?
- George: You have never mentioned anything about your religion or the Qur'an to me before, and now you're talking about it all the time! Were you manipulating me and pulling my leg?
- Adam: I'm sure that you'll find Islam, and leave all other religions. You're passing through a path that will take you to Islam, so why would I stand in your way by talking about Islam before you had reached the appropriate point in your journey? I have never had a different view about this except for one single moment!
- George: When?
- Adam: When you were sick, before you had the operation.
- George: Why?
- Adam: Frankly, I was afraid that you might die, and I would love my friend to be my companion in Paradise, God willing. Oh, this is Sheikh Bassem. He has arrived. Welcome Sheikh!
- Sheikh Bassem: Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you!
- Adam: Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you!

George exclaimed and said:

- George: Hello, what did you mean by what you just said?
- Sheikh Bassem: It is our way of saluting each other, and it's also a prayer for the person we meet. First you ask God to keep him away from any physical and moral harm; the physical safety refers to keeping one's body, honor and money safe, and the moral safety refers to keeping one's religion free from any wrong ideas which would ruin one's faith. Then you pray for him to have the mercy and blessings of Allah bestowed on him, because our religion is a religion of peace and compassion.
- George: Here we are starting to talk about religion again! I'll be traveling the day after tomorrow, so what arrangements do you suggest?
- Sheikh Bassem: Whatever you want. My brother lives there and he can arrange for you whatever you want.
- George: I don't know the work that is required to be done there yet, but I expect it's already been sent to my email by now. But after thinking about it, I decided to visit and see some particular sites for leisure of course, not work, and I expect you'll suggest some other places to go to and other things to do.
- Sheikh Bassem: What would you like to visit?
- George: I want to visit the pyramids, and the Orthodox Church and some of their priests. I also want to see some Muslim scholars.
- Sheikh Bassem: Everything you said is a piece of cake, and my brother will arrange it all for you. I've talked to him already, and I suggest that you meet and communicate with the normal man in the street there and chat with them.
- George: Fine, but how much are the costs of these tours that you will provide for me?
- Sheikh Bassem: We don't work for a tourist company; you'll pay for yourself concerning the cost of any tourist services, but for my brother, what he provides will be your right as a guest, and it's one of the acts of worship a Muslim is charged with.
- George: Do all Muslims do this?
- Sheikh Bassem : Ha ha ha! Of course not.

Adam sat up, and intending to joke he said:

- Adam: Watch out and be careful of thieves, pickpockets, charlatans and the like. There is no perfect society in this life; utopia is in the minds and dreams of only those who day-dream.

- George: But doesn't Islam encourage people to have morals?!
- Adam: Oh yes of course! Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to perfect the manners, as he said: "I have only been sent to perfect good manners." The commitment of Muslims to having noble and ethical traits is connected to the extent of their commitment to Islam. Ethics have existed even before the Prophet was sent to mankind, and he was only sent to perfect good conduct of the people. But you should be careful, because unfortunately our country has a weak economy and government.

Bassem put out his hand holding a card and said to George:

- Sheikh Bassem: Here, take this card which has all the information about my brother, and he'll be waiting for you at the airport if you send him a message to his email with the time of your arrival, or if you call him. Don't be afraid of anything; my brother speaks English.
- Adam: I also spoke to my brother a little while ago to invite you to our home, but he doesn't speak English so he won't be suitable as your guide.
- George: I'm forever grateful to you. I have to go now because I'm late, and I think I'll have to spend the whole day at the company tomorrow to finish the travel arrangements. I also still have some work that must be finished today. I'll be in touch with you from Egypt. I'm really so grateful to you.
- Adam: Egypt is eagerly waiting for you, good bye!
- Sheikh Bassem: God be with you!

(2)

George went to check his email to see if the details of the job in Egypt had been sent to him yet. He found two messages: the first was from Janolka, and the second from the director of public relations. He decided to open Janolka's message first.

"Dear George,

I am having a very good time here in Libya - more than I expected. It is true that there is a security problem in Libya these days, besides the problem of the weather, but for me, I feel as though I'm on a pleasant, refreshing spiritual tour, despite its desert drought.

I'll write to tell you my news regularly, and I hope you do the same; until we both find the path to happiness,

Janolka

PS If you had told me earlier that you were going to travel to Egypt, I would have traveled with you there instead of Libya."

Then he replied:

"Dear Janolka,

I apologize for not telling you I was traveling to Egypt; I did not think I would be going there, in fact my trip was just confirmed today. I'll tell you my news when I get there,

George

PS I didn't understand what you meant by a pleasant, refreshing spiritual tour. But as for me, I feel really dull spiritually right now."

Then he opened the message from the director of public relations. He read the details of the job that required to be fulfilled in Egypt with great concentration since the task was very difficult. He was asked to open a commercial and technical office in Cairo and it was to be the main center in the Middle East as a whole. It was clear that Kach did not want him to return quickly, so he was keen to make the task difficult - or almost impossible. Therefore, George decided to devote the rest of that day and the next in preparing for the trip to ensure that he would succeed in the test that Kach had given him.

George began sending messages to technical recruiters in Egypt. He told them that he would arrive after two days, and that he wanted to have some job applicants ready to meet with him as soon as possible. He also booked a room online at a luxury hotel for the first night, and considered renting rooms for the rest of the days with the help of Jamal - the brother of Bassem who George had met in hospital when he was visiting Adam. Then he began to search online for any information that might help him succeed in his journey, preparing suitable phrases for the contracts and looking for other way to reach success.

Katrina entered the room while he was immersed in the details of his work and his mission. He knew that Kach had given him a difficult test, and that Kach would be looking at him to see how he would perform. Therefore, he had to be well prepared to rise to the challenge and do the job well.

- Katrina: It was a very hard day, make me happy and tell me some good news.
- George: I'll be traveling to Egypt the day after tomorrow.

- Katrina: The day after tomorrow! What's the rush?!
- George: Not only this, but also I have been given a long and difficult job. Maybe I made a mistake when I chose Egypt, or maybe Kach wanted to take revenge and distort my reputation in front of the board of directors.
- Katrina: I'm sure you'll succeed in your task, regardless of how he tries to make things difficult for you. God is with you.
- George: I love you, Katrina. I'm afraid that this journey will take more than a month. I'll have to stay all that time in a foreign country that speaks a strange language and has a strange religion, civilization and regulations.
- Katrina: Maybe, but I have a feeling that you'll feel at ease on your journey.
- George: I hope so. Adam assures me that the country is beautiful; it seems that Adam loves his country very much.
- Katrina: All people love their country!
- George: Yes, but the strangest thing is that he loves Mecca more than Egypt, and the reason is that their prophet loved it most of all. What kind of obedience and love is this? Doesn't it remind you of the love we Christians have for our monks?
- Katrina: No, it reminds me of our love for Jesus, though our love for Jesus is different from their love for him.
- George: Different in what way?
- Katrina: We see Jesus as one who is divine, and they only see him as a prophet and a messenger. We focus on our love for Jesus and that he sacrificed himself to save us, while they focus on the fact that he was sent from God, and he taught them all that is good.
- George: What are the good things he taught?!
- Katrina: Islam; they see that everything in Islam is good.
- George: Everything is good!?
- Katrina: This is how they see it, and they have an Islamic answer for all areas of life, saying that it comes from God.
- George: What do you mean by saying "they see, they say?"!
- Katrina: Muslims.
- George: You said in your last email about the Qur'an: "It seems that it's from God." Your message was a big surprise to me, by all standards.
- Katrina: My findings after trying to answer your question about the truth of the claims that the Qur'an is from God really surprised me; there is no doubt that

what the Arabs read is from Muhammad, and it has not been distorted at all. But the question is: Was Muhammad truthful or not?

- George: What I understood from your message is that you think he's truthful; and so you said: "It seems that it's from God."
- Katrina: I didn't mean that, what I meant was that it isn't like the Old and the New Testament, which has different, conflicting versions.
- George: Although I'm enjoying this beautiful discussion with you, dear, I have to stop for now as I have a lot of work to do before I travel. By the way, where are the kids?
- Katrina: They went on a school trip. They told you yesterday, did you forget? Anyway, I expect that they'll be here soon and dinner will be ready then, though it's very late.
- George: Oh I forgot. And I'm very hungry; thanks a lot, honey. Excuse me for now; I'll get back to work until dinner is served.

(3)

George bid Katrina and the children farewell and went to the airport. He arrived at Cairo at six o'clock in the evening, and then he finished the arrival procedures and got his luggage. He made his way to the exit where he found someone carrying a board on which "George Neason" was written. It was written with large handwriting which indicated that the writer was not a master of English. George headed towards the man who signaled at him. The man smiled and called his friend, who came to welcome George.

- Jamal: Hello, welcome to Egypt. I am Jamal, Bassem›s brother, and this is Muhammad, Adam's brother. Sorry, he isn›t proficient in English, but he was keen on welcoming you.
- George: Thank you. Let's go to the airport hotel, I've booked a room there.
- Jamal: It›s up to you, but it›s situated far from the middle of the city, and Cairo is very crowded - besides it is very expensive.
- George: Okay then we can change it tomorrow, since I›ve only booked a room for one day. But I hope to move to another good hotel that›s close to downtown and the major companies in the city.
- Jamal: There are many hotels downtown, and tomorrow you can choose the one you want.

- George: Can I ask you to choose it for me and book a room for tomorrow please? If I like it I›ll stay there the whole time I›m in Cairo; because I›m going to be very busy.
- Jamal: Sure, anything that you need. Bassem insisted that I assist you to the best of my ability.
- George: Bassem›s hospitality for me is amazing!
- Jamal: It›s for several reasons: Firstly, because you›re a guest and the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered us to be hospitable to guests. Secondly, because you›re studying Islam, so we must tell you about Islam. And thirdly, because you are friendly with my brother, so I should reply by being good to you.
- George: Why do you Muslims keep mentioning and quoting your Prophet every time I say anything?! And who told you that I›m studying Islam?
- Jamal: We mention the Prophet a lot because we love him and he›s our perfect role model, and concerning you studying Islam; my brother, Bassem, told me you›re searching for happiness.
- George: Exactly, I›m looking for happiness, not Islam!
- Jamal: I don›t see any difference between the two as there is no happiness without Islam; otherwise you would›ve been happy in the West. It›s not a secret that in a country like Sweden, where the proportion of atheists and people who don›t believe in any religion is nearly 80%, is the region with the world›s highest suicide rate, although it›s one of the wealthiest countries. Isn›t suicide the epitome of unhappiness and misery?
- George: But don›t Muslims commit suicide as well?
- Jamal: Unfortunately, yes! But they have the lowest suicide rate and it is much less than other places. In a comprehensive scientific study by Dr. Jose Manuel and the researcher, Alessandra Fleishman, which was based upon documented references of the United Nations about the relationship between religion and committing suicide, they found that the largest proportion of suicide is committed between the atheists. They make up nearly 25% of the suicides. They›re then followed by Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and finally Muslims with less than 1%. The researchers own words read: «The suicide rate in Muslim countries, unlike all other lands, is almost zero, and the reason for this is that Islam clearly forbids suicide.»
- George: Does Islam forbid suicide?

- Jamal: Of course. It also forbids everything that causes any harm to man. The irony is that the Prophet actually mentioned 90% of the ways that suicide is carried out, according to the statistics. He (peace be upon him) said: «Whoever purposely throws himself from a mountain and kills himself will be in the (Hell) Fire falling down into it and abiding therein perpetually, and whoever drinks poison and kills himself with it will be carrying his poison in his hand and drinking it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide forever, and whoever kills himself with an iron weapon will be carrying that weapon in his hand and stabbing his abdomen with it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide forever.»
- George: It seems that your field of work has influenced you! That›s why you love numbers so much!
- Jamal: Thanks for the compliment. Actually, I majored in Maths as my brother told you, and mental maths increases mental reasoning, no doubt. But I first learned the scientific method from my religion.
- George: Everything is from your prophet and your religion! You›re exaggerating my friend!
- Jamal: Maybe, but don›t you think that the scientific method requires you to determine how much I›m exaggerating, and not to just directly accuse me of exaggerating?
- George: You won! How does your religion urge you to use the scientific method then?
- Jamal: Here are some of the axioms of Islam which are associated with the scientific method, for example Islam warned us of imitating anything without thinking: God says about the infidels: [When it is said to them: “Follow what Allah has sent down.” They say: “Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following.” (Would they do that?!) Even though their fathers did not understand anything, nor were they guided] (Al-Baqarah: 170). Regarding following conjecture, without relying on any scientific approach, God says: [And if you obey most of those on the earth, they will mislead you far away from Allah’s Path. They follow nothing but conjectures, and they do nothing but lie] (A-Anam: 116). Concerning following personal inclinations, which contradict science, logic and reason, God says: [And surely many do lead (mankind) astray by their own desires through lack of knowledge. Certainly your Lord knows best the transgressors] (Al-Anam: 119). Regarding hatred, which is far from justice, God says: [O you who believe! Stand

out firmly for Allah and be just witnesses, and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Acquainted with what you do] [Al-Maidah: 8]. Concerning scientific objectivity, God says about the Jews: [Among those who are Jews, there are some who displace words from (their) right places and say: “We hear your word (O Muhammad, peace be upon him) and disobey,” and “Hear and let you (O Muhammad, peace be upon him) hear nothing.” And “Ra’ina” with a twist of their tongues and as a mockery of the religion (Islam). And if only they had said: “We hear and obey,” and “Do make us understand,” it would have been better for them, and more proper, but Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so they believe not except a few] (Al-Nisaa: 46). With regards to transgression and discord, God says: [The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and wrongly rebel in the earth, for such there will be a painful punishment.] (Al-Shura: 42) Regarding scientific integrity with regards to the trust of spreading research data and being just with the people, God says: [Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice] (Al-Nisaa:58). Furthermore, concerning being persistent in being just and standing up for what is right God says: [O you who have believed! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin] (Al-Nisaa: 135). Concerning the importance of searching for evidence and proof, and relying on sound arguments, God says: [Is not He Who originates creation and shall thereafter repeat it (better than your so-called gods), and Who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there any ilah (god) with Allah? Say, “Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful”] (Al-Naml: 64), and…

- George: Okay, Okay! Enough said. I’m convinced. Are you a cleric like your brother?
- Jamal: My brother and I are not clerics like you have in the church. My brother studied Islamic Studies at university and I studied Mathematics. By the way, Mohammad, Adam’s brother, has invited you to dinner, and he wants to know what you would like to have for dinner; Egyptian food or some fast food?
- George: Egyptian food, but not a heavy meal.
- Jamal: We have here in Egypt a meal that we call ‘Koshari’. Would you like to try it?

- George: ‘Koshari’! I don’t know what it is; but okay, I’ll give it a try.
- Jamal: Koshari’s a dish made from pasta, rice, onions, tomatoes and other ingredients. Anyway, it’s very tasty and very popular. You’ll like it, God willing. Here’s a very well-known restaurant that serves it.
- Muhammad wasn’t comfortable with Jamal’s choice, so he said to him:
- Muhammad: Jamal, I don’t think it’s a good idea to let our guest from abroad have a plain dish like Koshari. This isn’t very hospitable.
- Jamal: Of course Muhammad, but this is what he asked for. George, Muhammad has objected to inviting you to a cheap restaurant, and he would like to invite you to an expensive restaurant, so what do you think?
- George: Please, extend my thanks to him for his kindness, and tell him this is what I asked for and I’m pleased with it.
- Jamal: That’s just what I told you!
- Muhammad: Jamal, tell him that we’ll give him what he wants, but with a strong apology; as we are accustomed to being as generous as we can with our guests; this is our custom, and also part of our religion.
- George: Everything you say or do is because of Islam or Muhammad; it seems to me that you Muslims are more religious than us Christians.
- Jamal: How? Sorry, I don’t understand.
- George: We limit ourselves to praying on Sunday, but you pray more than once every day. You admire and take your religion and your prophet seriously, but we don›t treat anything with such great respect, even our prophets. You see your religion as a complete way of life, and we see ours only as a spiritual relationship.
- Jamal: Is what you›ve said meant as a form of praise, or a way of criticizing Muslims?
- George: Ha ha ha! I’m only describing what I see; you become annoyed quickly at anyone who vilifies things which you consider holy. It’s enough to mention what the Afghans did when some Americans insulted a copy of the Qur›an and burned it!
- Jamal: Whoever does not attach importance to anything which is considered sacred and doesn›t revere his prophets has no worth. Don›t you revere the queen of Britain? Don›t Americans revere their founding superiors? Don›t Communists revere Marx and Lenin? Don›t Nazis revere Hitler? We Muslims revere the prophets, all of them. We even revere Jesus (peace be upon him) more than the

Christians themselves do, and we love him more than you do, but we don›t honor him more than we should because Jesus (peace be upon him) is only a servant and a messenger of God.

- George: Oh yes, what you say is true, but I think you›re exaggerating!
- Jamal: We would be exaggerating if we said that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a god, as you have said about Jesus!
- George: I mean you are exaggerating in connecting all of your life to religion.
- Jamal: As for the relationship between religion and life; I think that whoever considers the relationship between a person and his Lord to be just a spiritual temporary relationship through only prayer but continues all his life without thinking about his Lord does not understand life, religion or God, and - excuse me for saying this- he will remain in the misery, worry and distress that this worldly existence brings until he commits the suicide that we talked about a little while ago. In a nutshell, there is no meaning to life, religion or God if they are not in a permanent bond with each other.

They went to a restaurant that serves Koshari, and they sat down at a small table that impressed George. The restaurant was crowded, and the workers were working hard and meeting the demands of the customers quickly. They ordered three dishes of Kushari and they were served in only a few minutes.

- The waiter: Mention the name of God, sir, the Kushari has arrived!
- George: What did the waiter say?
- Jamal: He is reminding me to mention the name of God before eating.
- George: Why is that?!
- Jamal: To continue our previous conversation, we mentioned that one’s entire life should be a form of the worship of God. Therefore, before eating we mention the name of God; it means that he begins this act accompanied or assisted by (the name of God); seeking blessings from him.
- George: Impressive!
- Jamal: Islam did not miss anything without stating the rule of God about it, as God, exalted is He, says: [There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered] (Al-Anam: 38).
- George: Everything!

- Jamal: Ha ha ha, now you remind me of a narration of something that happened at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Once a non-Muslim man said mockingly to the Companions: “Your Prophet taught you everything, even about excrement.” They replied: “Yes. He has forbidden us to face the qiblah at the time of easing or urinating, and cleansing with the right hand, and cleansing with less than three stones, or cleansing with dung or bone.”
- George: Is what your prophet’s companion said true, or is it just a debate and an argument for a non-Muslim? Is it true that the morals in Islam are set out in such detail?
- Jamal: Yes it is true, and all praise is due to God for perfecting the religion; God, the Almighty said: [This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion] (Al-Maidah:3). In addition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent to perfect good manners.
- George: Why do you think that only Muslims possess good morals?
- Jamal: You probably didn’t notice what I said a little while ago: “The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘I have only been sent to perfect good manners.’” Perfection means that people had good manners but the Prophet came to perfect them and make people follow a complete system of morals. And this is part of the beauty of Islam and shows how unique it is.
- George: What do you mean?
- Jamal: I mean that Islam completes and complements previous ethics, religions and legislations perfectly. It is integral to the message of Adam, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon all of them). Morals in Islam are not something marginal; rather they are an inherent issue in our religion.
- George: Is the Koshari an inherent thing in your religion?
- Jamal (laughing): It’s an inherent thing in Egypt, not in Islam. It’s food that both the poor and the rich eat.
- George (taking a spoonful of Koshari): Mmmm, the Koshari is delicious!
- Jamal: Bon appétit! Thanks to our host Muhammad who has remained silent; as he does not speak English well.
- George: Please, extend my thanks to him and tell him that it is one of the best food I›ve ever eaten.
- Muhammad: We still have the milk pudding desert, which has already been or-

dered.

- Jamal: Muhammad is telling you that we›ll have a milk pudding desert, and that he has already ordered it. It›s a kind of traditional Egyptian sweet.

After completing their food, they went to the airport hotel where George had booked a room. After he finished the checking in procedures, Jamal told him that he'd go to him the following morning.

George entered the room and arranged his possessions. After that he took a bath and then he checked his e-mail, where he found replies from his colleagues. He summarized the main points of the replies into one reply and sent it back to them.

"The answers were surprising and useful to me, and they are as follows:

Habib: I don›t like Islam, even though many of its theories are scientific. I advise you to visit the Orthodox Church.

Levvi: When you discuss Islam you need to discuss the brutality, extremism, backwardness and corruption.

Katrina: I don›t really know what keeps attracting people to this religion! Maybe it›s better to make sure of their love for Christ and that they honor women first.

Adam: The best reference is the book of God, the Qur›an, and I wish that nobody would talk about Islam if he has not studied it and learned from it.

Janolka: Islam has a deep simplicity, and a simple depth. But I don›t understand what the magic that is implied in these ideas is! I prefer to read some of the writings of the fair minded westerners about Islam.

And now my view: I think that there are strange secrets in Islam, such as the stress on monotheism, comprehensiveness, reassurance, spirituality, knowledge, strength, rules for women, a credible reference and history.

I suggest that the following message should be to try and make the confusing matters that I mentioned clear, so if anyone of you has any opinion or knowledge about any of them, please share it with us,

George»

After sending this message he found a new message from Levvi:

"Dear George,

I hope you have arrived safely in Egypt and you are fine and doing well. I feel that you are moving vigorously and rushing towards Islam, unlike your previous studies of Judaism and Christianity. Take care of yourself and you should be on your guard from the Muslims; I fear for you,

Levvi “

Then he replied:

“ Dear Levvi,

Thank you for your sincere feelings. I›ll be careful and write and tell you my news regularly. It might be as you have mentioned, but trust me I›ll never rush into any religion unless I feel fully comfortable about it, and I›ll consult you about it first. Thank you for your concern,

George»

He also found a message from Kach, which he opened.

“Dear George,

I’m pleased that you kept away from the company, and that you took a task that you did not know about before you agreed to travel. I wish you success; I have arranged everything for you, but if you fail, you will take the result of your failure. I›m waiting for your success,.

Kach»

At seven in the morning George went down from his room at the hotel for breakfast. He liked the hotel buffet, where a variety of different types of food, both international and Egyptian breakfast dishes, were available. He began tasting and coming across new dishes he had never seen before.

The waiter asked him in poor English if he would like to be served.

- George: Yes, please.
- The waiter: Where are you from, sir?
- George: Britain.
- George: And you?
- The waiter: I’m from Alexandria in Egypt.
- George: Could you tell me about Alexandria?
- The waiter: Alexandria is one of Egypt’s largest cities. It is an ancient city that was founded by Alexander the Great, the Macedon, in 332 BC.

George remembered what he had read about that ancient city. Alexander wanted it to bear his name, and to be a center of trade and Hellenistic civilization. Then many ages and civilizations passed through it. It has a lot of historical monuments; such as the lighthouse of Alexandria, which is considered to be one of the wonders of the ancient world, and the Library of Alexandria.

Christianity had entered it through Saint Mark, the Apostle, in 45 AD, and then it became one of the scientific centers of development for Christians. It also contributed to the study of philosophy; it had the most famous philosophical school; the Updated Platonic School, as well as the Theological School of Alexandria that formed the parameters of thought and Christian theology in the world. Then he remembered its role after Islam as Alexandria remained a scientific fortress; it became a scientific center where scholars from Morocco and Andalusia received religious knowledge before returning to their countries ...

The waiter interrupted him and said:

- The waiter: It seems that you're busy thinking about something, excuse me for now.

George took notice of what the waiter had said, and then said to him:

- George: Sorry, I was just thinking about Alexandria and its ancient history.
- The waiter: I didn't finish my basic education and can hardly write, but I like Egypt and Alexandria in particular. Alexandria is undoubtedly an historical city. Have you ever visited it, sir?
- George: You have made me want to visit it. Are you a Muslim?
- The waiter: No, I'm a Christian.
- George: How is the relationship between Muslims and Christians? How did Islam enter Egypt?
- The waiter: A war between Muslims and the Byzantines broke out, and the Egyptian Copts were fighting with the Muslims against the Byzantines.
- George: The Christian Copts!
- The waiter: Copts are the indigenous people of Egypt, but this does not mean they are all Christians. When Muslims conquered Alexandria, its people enjoyed religious freedom. Muslims kept the Jewish community safe, and they never opposed the church.
- George: How come you haven't converted to Islam if you admire Muslims?
- The waiter: I was born like this, so why should I change my religion and the religion of my fathers and forefathers? Is it possible for you to change your religion?
- George: Maybe… but what stops one from changing if he is not totally convinced about his religion; to change because of being convinced about a religion would be more appropriate.
- The waiter: But I don't like change, and I don't like the difficult conditions of

Islam.

- George: The difficult conditions of Islam?!
- The waiter: Five prayers every day, alms-giving, fasting the month of Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, don›t lie, don›t steal, don›t backbite and don›t commit adultery, and so on.
- George: But they enjoy Islam, and even consider that it improves life and one's happiness.
- The waiter: Maybe they enjoy it, but I don›t. I›m sorry for taking so much of your time.
- George: No problem. I›ve finished having breakfast, and thanks for your time.

George went upstairs and arranged his luggage, as he wanted to move from that hotel to another one, and asked for a porter. His luggage was carried downstairs and he went down to the lounge to wait for Jamal. As soon as he had finished the checkout procedures, Jamal arrived to take him.

- Jamal: You seem ready and eager to work!
- George: Yeah, I have a lot of work that must be completed today.
- Jamal: Okay, we are going to put your bags in the hotel, and then I'll take you wherever you want.
- George: So where is the new hotel?
- Jamal: It's a hotel in a suburb called Al-Ma'adi, overlooking the Nile.
- George: Is it near my work?
- Jamal: Cairo is relatively large; I don't know exactly where your work is. God willing, it will be suitable and close to your work. Anyway, if it doesn't suit you, we can change it.

They arrived at the new hotel and finished the check-in procedures.

- Jamal: I'll wait for you to get some rest and then we'll leave.
- George: No, don't worry, I don't need any rest. I'll go upstairs to the room and be back right away.

George came back quickly with vigor and a smile on his face.

- George: I want to go to this address, please. It's a recruitment company I've contacted.
- Jamal: The company is situated in Giza, it's not far away and is also close to the pyramids.
- George: Great! How I wish to see the pyramids!

- Jamal: Sure, you can’t visit Egypt and miss the pyramids.
- George: Were the pyramids built because of your religion too?
- Jamal: No, the pyramids were built by the Pharaohs. The era of the Pharaohs came before Prophet Muhammad and Jesus (peace be upon them both). Many people who lived at the time of the Pharaohs were monotheists and some of them were disbelievers. Don’t you know the story of Pharaoh who said to Prophet Moses (peace upon him), “I am your most exalted lord”? He also afflicted the children of Israel with the worst form of torment, until God drowned him.
- George: Yes, I read this story in the Old Testament (the Torah), and in the Qur’an.
- Jamal: Fantastic… please tell me honestly: which of these two books appreciate and revere Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) more?
- George: Honestly... the Qur’an; even though he a Jewish prophet, but ...
- Jamal: Sorry for interrupting, but please tell me honestly: which of these books appreciate and revere Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) the most: the Qur’an, the Old Testament, or what you call the New Testament?
- George: The Bible reveres him in one way, and the Qur’an reveres him another way.
- Jamal: How?
- George: On the one hand, the Qur’an appreciates and reveres Jesus, mentioning his morals and only talking well of him, but on the other hand the New Testament also appreciates and reveres him but it honors him to the extent of making him a god!
- Jamal: Do you think that by making a human being a god you are actually honoring him, or are you lying against him?
- George: I understand very well what you mean, and I know you probably will say that some copies of the New Testament had stated that he’s a servant of God and not a god, and other things like that. And you have a right to say that, but you asked for my opinion on a specific point.
- Jamal: Did you hear about the research: “Was Jesus a Muslim?” conducted by the Head of Religions and Beliefs Department in Luther University in the United States of America, Professor Robert Shedinger?
- George: Yes, but I only skimmed over it quickly, and I think the author exaggerated. How can he claim that Christ was a Muslim when Islam came after him?
- Jamal: Whoever says that which is contradictory to what you are used to is ac-

cused of exaggerating, being an unbeliever, or in opposition to the scientific method. The writer is the Head of the Theology Department in a major University, and he did not change his words, besides the university supports him. Don't you see that man needs psychological freedom and great courage in order to take some decisions?

- George: Maybe. I agree with some of what you said.
- Jamal: Well, we have arrived. Do you want me to go up with you, or should I return to take you when you've finished?
- George: Hmm, I don't know… let's go up together for now until things become clear, and then I'll tell you.

They entered the global recruitment company's office and asked to meet the director. The secretary told them that the director, Dr. Gerges, left and would return after two hours... so they told the secretary that they would return to meet him then.

- Jamal: We have two hours and we are near the pyramids. Would you like to see them to kill time while we wait, or do you have another engagement?
- George: Good idea, let's go to the pyramids, and then meet Mr. Gerges.
- Jamal: Fine... by the way, the director of the recruitment firm is Christian like you, but he is Orthodox, not Protestant.
- George: How did you know? Do you know him?
- Jamal: No, but it's clear from his name; a man named Gerges must be a Christian as only Christians give their children this name. I also know he's Orthodox because all the Christians here in Egypt are Orthodox, and not Protestant... I know you each think the other is a disbeliever.
- George: Aren't there any sects in Islam that think the other is a disbeliever?!
- Jamal: Unfortunately, yes there are.
- George: Like who?
- Jamal: There are sects that exceed the proper limits; they deny the Qur'an, insult the Prophet's companions and his pure wives, and they perform a lot of mythical rituals.
- George: Where are they?
- Jamal: They are a minority in the Muslim world, and they are concentrated in Iran, Iraq and other countries.
- George: You mean the Shiites!

- Jamal: I rather mean al-Rawafed who reject the Qur'an and Sunnah, and others who say they are affiliated to Islam; such as Baha'is, Qadiani and others.
- George: So you have rival sects that think the others are disbelievers, like us?
- Jamal: No, we are not like you. Most of the Muslims believe that the Qur'an has never been changed, but as for you, none of the Christian sects, whether Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant or any other sect, have a copy of the Bible that has not been changed at all, and I think you are aware of this point very well.
- George: I understand the difference that you're talking about, but I see there is some kind of similarity. Anyway, are there Shiites in Egypt?
- Jamal: Yes there are, but only a handful, even though they ruled Egypt for a period of time.
- George: What happened then? Did you kill them after that?
- Jamal: We are not like you. Their rule finished and then people kept holding onto the Prophetic tradition and their pure natural instinct, and the Shiites in the country returned to the Prophetic tradition and Islam.
- George: What do you mean by 'We are not like you'?
- Jamal: I hope you didn't misunderstand me, I really didn't mean to offend you, but for example, just let me ask this question: where are the indigenous people of Australia? Where are the Native Americans?
- George: Can you please explain more?
- Jamal: You know how entire peoples were wronged and unfortunately some were even wiped out, but Islam has forbidden injustice and ordered people to be just… Oh, look! There are the pyramids. We can see them in the distance.
- George: How huge they are!
- Jamal: Their great size and the mastery of their constitution will become clearer when we approach them. We'll park here and get out and take a carriage, but I advise you to take great care of your personal belongings.
- George: What do you mean?
- Jamal: Tourist areas in most countries of the world are places of theft and lootings, and this does not happen exclusively in Egypt, though methods of theft vary from one country to another.
- George: Aren't Muslims not supposed to steal, as you say?
- Jamal: The Muslim is not an angel, he is a human; he has his faults, weaknesses and deficiencies just like others, but his religion prevents him from stealing

things, while other religions encourage theft.

- George: How?
- Jamal: Some religions - even if they have adopted basic ideas which are sound - encourage injustice, killings and stealing from others. As for Islam, it categorically forbids such acts, but as much as people are far away from their religion, they will be far from the ethics and the spirit of Islam, and consequently many bad morals and qualities that have been forbidden by the Islamic Law have become wide-spread, such as theft, adultery, drinking alcohol, lying, breaking promises, selfishness and so on. Here we are, let's go.
- George: It seems that it will be a fun trip.

Jamal rented two horses and they rode them to take a tour around the pyramids. The two men who were holding the bridles of the horses were not fluent in English, so George asked Jamal to ask them to finish their tour quickly to ensure they would complete it during the two hours. At the end of the trip they went to the car to go to their appointment.

- George: Thanks a million, Jamal! It was a really enjoyable trip. Shall we go back to the office now?
- Jamal: Sure, or if you want you can call him to meet you at the hotel as it's one o'clock now.
- George: Good, I'll do that.

George put his hand in his pocket to take out his mobile phone and found that some money that was in his pocket was missing! He checked his pocket well, but he could not find it…

- George: It seems that I've been robbed!
- Jamal: Everything will be just fine God willing, maybe you dropped it.
- George: No, I suspect that the man who was leading my horse put his hand in my pocket and took it while I was getting off the horse, but I'm glad he didn't put his hand in the other pocket where my wallet and credit cards were.
- Jamal: Thank God. Didn't I tell you to be wary of thieves and to be careful!
- George: The amount was not much. Anyway, let me call Dr. Gerges, the director of the recruitment company.

George agreed to meet Dr. Gerges at the hotel at about two o'clock, and told Jamal about the meeting. When they arrived at the hotel, George asked Jamal to go upstairs with him to the room to continue their conversation…

- Jamal: Excuse me, but I prefer to leave now and let you have your work meeting with Dr. Gerges.
- George: I expect that it will be a short meeting; it's just to prepare for a lengthy meeting tomorrow. Besides, I want to discuss some important topics with you, unless you're busy.
- Jamal: No, I'm not busy. I'll come with you then.

They went to the room and George made them two cups of tea from the guest's table in the room. They sat and talked for a few minutes until the phone rang; it was the receptionist who told George that the director of the recruitment company was waiting for him in the reception area.

George took some papers quickly and excused himself to meet with Dr. Gerges. Gerges, a man of medium build who was in his fifties, warmly welcomed and greeted George...

- George: If you find it suitable, we can quickly discuss the preparations for tomorrow's meeting now.
- Gerges: Certainly, it's very suitable.
- George: As I mentioned to you in the e-mail, I need to employ a number of technicians and even though they will be working here in Cairo, I want to have distinctive well-qualified employees.
- Gerges: I've already arranged for you to meet with some applicants tomorrow, if you like.
- George: Great, so how can you help me in the selection process?
- Gerges: There were many applicants, but we have already picked out the best to meet with you.
- George: What kind of criteria did you use in the selection process?
- Gerges: According to their professional abilities, of course! Sorry, but I don't understand what you mean.
- George: Is one of the criteria that the applicant must be a Christian like us?

It became apparent on Gerges' face that he had become angry...

- Gerges: First, how did you know that I'm a Christian? Second, the owner of the company is a Muslim and I'm only the manager. Third, the candidates are ten and only one of them is Christian, and the rest are Muslims. Forth…
- George: Sorry for interrupting, but I really didn't mean to offend you – I just expected that there was a crisis and conflict between the Christians and Muslims; I

just wanted to make things clear.

- Gerges: Actually we live together in harmony and not as you imagine in the West, or rather, as you like to think of us. In fact, no one protected the Christian minorities in Egypt but the Islamic rule, and so, according to history, Christians used to fight with the Muslims and they were included in the Islamic army.
- George: Fine, I just wanted to make sure that the criteria used in the selection process were not racial.
- Gerges: Please be rest assured, candidates were judged according to their professional abilities, although the percentage of Christian candidates that applied was greater than the percentage of Christians in the population here.
- George: How is that?
- Gerges: As one out of ten is more than the percentage of the Christians in Egypt. Anyway, I might tell you something extra concerning this tomorrow, though I don't know if you'll like it and be pleased about it or not.
- George: Great! Excuse me for now; I have to go because I have a friend waiting for me in the room upstairs. By the way, he is an Egyptian Muslim. We'll meet tomorrow at nine o'clock at the company, and I hope to meet as many candidates as I can to be able to choose the new employees.
- Gerges: Agreed. I'll be waiting for you tomorrow then, and you'll be satisfied, God willing. Egypt is a country that has very many qualified cadres.

George went up to his room and apologized to Jamal for the delay. He suggested that they go downstairs to have lunch in the hotel restaurant..

- George: Can I ask you a direct question?
- Jamal: Go ahead, George.
- George: Excuse me if I may sound bold, but what benefit do you gain from staying with me, giving me lifts and accompanying me?
- Jamal: My benefit is very great and clear.
- George: What is it?
- Jamal: In our religion, serving people is very important; it is one of the best ways to worship God.
- George: Is this your only benefit?
- Jamal: No, there are other benefits, such as serving a friend of my brother, and there is also something that is more important than all that; inviting you to Islam.
- George: Sorry; but as for the last benefit, I don't think you'll receive much from

it. But tell me what financial benefit is involved, how much do you want for these deeds?

- Jamal: Believe me, I didn't think about that. Fix the sum as you like, but only after the first three days since I owe you the first three days as you are a guest.
- George: It has been a long day though it's still early, but I want to finish some work in my room and sleep early. I'm grateful to you. We can meet tomorrow at eight o'clock to go to the company, because I agreed with Gerges to meet him at nine o'clock.
- Jamal: Okay, that's suitable, God willing.

George put his hand in his pocket to take out his wallet in order to foot the bill, but he did not find it…

- George: It seems that I forgot my wallet in the room; I'll go upstairs to fetch it then come back. Can you wait a few minutes?
- Jamal: Hold on; tell me why you need your wallet now.
- George: I want to leave a tip for the waiter who served us.
- Jamal: Here is one hundred pounds, take it for now since you don't have Egyptian currency and pay me back tomorrow, God willing, when you change some money, so that you only need to go up the stairs once. Besides it's nearly five o'clock now and you said that you wanted to prepare some work.
- George: Thanks, Jamal, I'm really grateful to you.

(5)

George went up to his room and turned his computer on to finish his work. Then he remembered his wallet. He searched high and low, but couldn't find it. He was then sure that it was not in the room; he became very worried since it contained his credit cards and cash. He kept thinking about it for a long time and then he called Jamal...

- George: Where's my wallet?
- Jamal: You said you left it in the room.
- George: Please be more specific about that, I left it in the room and I left you there as well, but when I came back I couldn't find it.
- Jamal: What do you mean, George?
- George: Listen, you can't deceive me with that hundred pounds you gave me, bring me back my wallet now. Do I make myself clear?

- Jamal: Excuse me, but I didn't take it!
- George: You were alone in the room and it was there too; who else could have possibly taken it then?
- Jamal: I'll repeat what I've just said; I never took it!
- George: And you say: "I do this to earn the reward from God and to serve my brother." Things have become clear now, it seems that your religion is the religion of theft; I have been robbed twice in one day!
- Jamal: Please, don't attack Islam, and I didn't take it.
- George: Where did it go then? Did it grow wings and fly away?!
- Jamal: Why are you speaking to me like this?
- George: If I don't find the wallet before nine in the morning, I'll call the police. And you keep saying that serving people is an act of worship in your religion; it seems that robbing people is an act of worship in your religion too. I don't want to beat around the bush; our appointment will be at eight tomorrow so bring the wallet with you, and that's my final word on the matter.

George finished the call and threw himself on the bed. He was angry and very confused..

- George: It seems that Kach will defeat me! What brought me to this country? To be introduced to Islam, the religion of theft! I have been robbed twice today… moreover, Jamal comes to tell me that he wants me to convert to Islam! What kind of nonsense is this?!
- George kept thinking deeply about the matter for nearly an hour. He was tense and very upset, he was sure that the tension was not actually because of missing the sum of money or the credit cards in his wallet, despite their being important, it was all because he felt that he was like a little child who was being manipulated by others in the name of religion. It crossed his mind that he should send a message to the bank to deactivate his credit cards, but then he realized that it's not a bright idea because he would need them, and he hoped that he would get his wallet back the following day and finish this dirty play … Suddenly, he remembered the following day's appointment, so he murmured: "It's a good thing that tomorrow's appointment is with a Christian and not a Muslim, it means he will be more sincere with me.'"

He then decided to call him and tell him what happened.

- Gerges: Hello George, appointment canceled?

- George: No, not at all. I've been robbed by my Muslim friend who was in my room during our meeting, and now I would like to consult you, what should I do?
- Gerges: Are you sure he robbed you?
- George: Unfortunately, yes. I left him and I left my wallet in the room, and when I came back I didn't find it.
- Gerges: Maybe you should search the room well, or maybe you dropped it in the hotel.
- George: No, I'm sure. How stupid I was when Bassem was making a fool of me in the name of religion. I threatened to call the police if he did not bring it back by tomorrow morning.
- Gerges: We'll just have to hope for the best, but I'll tell you something: the police won't help since you haven't got any concrete proof about him, as I understand from your words.
- George: Yes, there's no proof, but what's the solution?
- Gerges: What time will you see him tomorrow?
- George: We agreed to meet at eight.
- Gerges: Okay, can you give me his phone number to talk him round?
- George: Here, write it down.
- Gerges: I hope that you'll rest now, and tomorrow we can discuss what we'll do. Anyway, I hope he brings it back.

George: George ended the call and felt a little quieter. So he checked his e-mail and found a message from Janolka:

"Dear George

I hope you are happy in Egypt as much as I am in Libya. The people here are very friendly, very well-mannered and very religious. Perhaps the difference between the western nature and the nature of these Arabs is that ethics to them are part of their religion, and not just a utilitarian characteristic one has to gain benefits from the people, like it is in the West. I'm waiting for good news about you and your health,

Janolka"

Then he replied:

"Dear Janolka,

I am so glad you are happy in Libya, but I hope you are very careful about these Muslims; for me, I have been robbed twice up to now by the Egyptian Muslims - one from a person who was even calling me to Islam, and no one supported me in my plight but a Christian like me. How I wish to finish my work quickly here and go back to Britain,

George”

He then wrote a message to Levvi as a reply to her message in which she told him to be wary about the Muslims:

“Dear Levvi,

Unfortunately, what you warned me against has happened; I have been robbed in Egypt! Despite what you have mentioned formerly about being impulsive towards Islam, I have become certain that it is an immoral religion. Maybe Islam is not distorted like Judaism or Christianity, but it is not a moral religion at all. I’ll write to you regularly and tell you my other news soon, but I just remembered your words of warning to me and that I didn’t benefit from them,

George”

He also found his friends’ replies to his earlier questions, but he had no desire to read any of them. So he switched off his computer and lay down on his bed to try to sleep, but he couldn’t. He rose from the bed and turned on the TV on the BBC English Channel, he watched the news a little and then he kept changing from one channel to another until he came across an Islamic channel in English.

The program was talking about the good qualities in Islam, and that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent only to perfect morals. In the meantime, he said to himself:

- “Maybe these Islamic peoples have schizophrenia and double standards. How I hate this religion with double standards!”

He could not complete the program, because he began to get increasingly irritated at it, so he decided to try to sleep again. He kept moving about in the bed until he fell asleep. Then he awoke suddenly at about three in the morning. He went to the toilet and when he came out he came across his wallet, next to the sink! He remembered that he went to the toilet before going downstairs to meet Dr. Gerges in the afternoon, and because he was in a hurry to leave, he took the official papers and did not notice that he had forgotten his wallet until he missed it – and the rest of the story is clear!

He sat on his bed, shocked, and began to feel dizzy. How should he apologize to Jamal for what he had done? He abused him and accused him of theft before making sure of his allegation. The real catastro-

phe is that he accused him without any proof. Adam warned him many times of being impulsive and becoming annoyed. What should he do now?

(6)

At eight in the morning Jamal arrived at the hotel and asked the clerk at the reception desk to call George and tell him he had arrived. The receptionist said to him:

- The receptionist: George, the British?
- Jamal: Yes!
- The receptionist: Sorry, he was taken early in the morning to the hospital because he had a sharp drop in his blood pressure.
- Jamal: Has he come back?
- The receptionist: Yes, he came back almost two hours ago, but I don't know if he's asleep or not?
- Jamal: I hope you can call him now and tell him that there's someone named Jamal who wants to see him and make sure he's fine.

The receptionist called George informing him of the presence of Jamal. George asked him to let Jamal go up to his room. Jamal went up to the room and George opened the door. He looked exhausted and obviously fatigued.

- Jamal: I'm so sorry George, but believe me; I didn't mean to abuse you. This is my wife's jewelry bag, keep it with you as a pledge of my honesty until the bank opens, and then I'll go and bring you a sum of money as I could not get your wallet and I don't know how much money you had in it!
- George: Is this all out of fear of the police?
- Jamal: I'm sorry for what happened, but the police will not be able to do anything.
- George: So why did you bring your wife's jewelry?
- Jamal: You are a guest and you have a right to be honored; besides, your means are confined and we must help you. Moreover, I don't want to discredit the image of Islam in your eyes.
- George: Are you still insisting that it was not you who took it?
- Jamal: I didn't take it, there's no doubt about that. But I don't want to discuss that now so that you don't get tired.
- George: What would you do if you were me?

- Jamal: Actually, I don't know, this is based on how important the wallet was for me and on my needs and my psychological stability. Perhaps being specialized in mathematics makes me turn everything into calculations.
- George: What if you behaved like me, what would you expect me to do if I were you?
- Jamal: Please excuse me from answering that.
- George: Do you expect me to do what you have just done?
- Jamal: No, actually. But you deserve it.
- George: What if you found your wallet after all, what would you say to your friend?
- Jamal: Have you found it?
- George: It's just an assumption; try to continue with me in my mental assumptions.
- Jamal: I would have to apologize to my friend, and I think that the issue would be very difficult and it might grieve me.
- George: What if you apologized to him but he did not accept your apology and he did not forget what you did?
- Jamal: He has a right to do that, although it is better to forget mistakes, and forgive and pardon them. God is forgiving and loves forgiveness.
- George: Then I have an apology to make to you, Jamal - I found my wallet, and because of that, my blood pressure dropped and I was taken to the hospital. I didn't know what I should do. I repeat my apologies to you. Please forgive me; God loves forgiveness, as you said.

Jamal began crying, and he wiped his tears that wouldn't stop.

- Jamal: I forgive you, but all I can say is that I could not sleep since yesterday up to this moment, and neither could my wife, my brother Bassem, and Adam in Britain.

- George: Did you tell them?
- Jamal: The earth felt so restricted although it is vast as I tried to look for a solution, and Gerges also called me trying to preach and teach me how the ethics of Islam should be. Besides, I didn't want to be a test or trial for you, making you go astray. God says: ["Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the disbelievers, and forgive us, Our Lord! Verily, You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."] (Al-Mum'tahanah:5)

- George: I’m so sorry, it was all my fault.
- Jamal: Despite the wounds that have been caused, I consider that the situation has ended as if it had not happen, just let bygones be bygones. How are you now?
- George: I’m fine, but I’ve made a big mistake.
- Jamal: I have forgiven you, but on one condition.
- George: What is it?
- Jamal: To forget what happened and to care for yourself, otherwise I’ll not forgive you.
- George: I agree on your condition, but on the condition that you forget the error which I made.
- Jamal: Done! Have you had breakfast?
- George: No.
- Jamal: I’m inviting you for breakfast, but try to get ready quickly so as not to be late for the appointment with Gerges. I’ll go ahead to the restaurant and wait downstairs.
- George: I’ll be with you in five minutes.

Contradictions

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Contradictions

Contradictions

(1)

- George: It's half past eight; do you think we'll be able to keep our appointment with Gerges.
- Jamal: Let's have breakfast quickly then go to him, and en route we'll contact him and tell him that we may be a little bit late. I'm sure he'll understand. Gerges is a respectable man, except for his cruel words to me yesterday...
- George: … His cruel words?!
- Jamal: He contacted me yesterday and praised you very much.
- George: I am sorry again about everything that happened.
- Jamal: It seems that you want to go back on our agreement!
- George: No, thank you Jamal. How grateful I am to you.

George and Jamal arrived at the world employment company, and George asked about Gerges; the secretary told him that he was waiting for him. The two entered and Gerges welcomed them.

- Gerges: Give me good news; did your friend bring the wallet?!
- George: First, let's have a seat; second, I am sorry for the delay.
- Gerges: I spoke to your friend Jamal for a long time yesterday, and in fact he is a respectable man and I do not think he stole it - but I pressurized him a lot.
- George: Sorry, I tired you and hope you will forgive me. Jamal has a great character and he forgave me; I found my wallet in the hotel bathroom!
- Gerges: Ah, your mercy my Lord. May the Lord forgive you and me, I was very rough with Jamal!
- George: This is my friend Jamal.
- Gerges: My brother, excuse me for what I said yesterday.
- Jamal: Let bygones be bygones. The matter is finished and we have agreed to close it completely.
- Gerges: When did you know that George had found his wallet?
- Jamal: I found out at eight o›clock, when I gave him my wife›s gold in lieu of his wallet.
- Gerges: O Lord, I beg Your forgiveness. I›m sorry again, God is truthful [O you who believe! If a rebellious evil person comes to you with any news, verify it, lest

you harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful for what you have done] (Al-Hujurat: 6)

- George: What text is this?
- Gerges: This is an excerpt from the holy Qur›an.
- George: Do your Christians memorize the holy Qur›an too?
- Gerges: Didn't I say to you I had a surprise for you tomorrow and I didn't know if it would appeal to you or not! I embraced Islam only six months ago.
- George: Have you embraced Islam and left Christianity?!
- Gerges: Yes, what is strange about that? A lot of people adopt Islam; truly Islam is spreading quickly in the entire world, compared to other religions.
- George: Nothing strange, it is just the first time I have seen someone who›s adopted Islam.

Jamal was surprised and put his hand over his head, and said:

- Jamal: I was surprised about what you said to me yesterday, my brother, and I thought you were saying things for humanitarian reasons. May God make you happy in this world and the Hereafter.
- George: Happiness in this world and the Hereafter?! Regarding the Hereafter I do not know about it, but as for this world, there is happiness in the West.
- Jamal: If you mean the means of comfort and welfare, then I agree with you, but if you mean psychological happiness, the cases of unhappiness are on the increase. Thus, the cases of suicide, madness, breakdowns and psychological diseases are increasing very much in the West.
- George: Are you referring to me, Jamal?
- Jamal: I do not understand! What is the connection with what I have just said and you?
- George: I am part of that West you are speaking about.
- Jamal: The issue is concerned with the understanding of the meaning of happiness; if it is concerned with welfare or with inner emotions. I think the material life that lacks any spirituality is the cause of confusion, and so it is the cause of unhappiness.
- Gerges: Praise be to God that you found your wallet. So let›s leave the issue of happiness for now, as there are people waiting for their interviews and we have work to do.
- Jamal: You are right. Sorry, I am leaving now. When shall I return, George?

- Gerges: I expect to be late and suggest that you have a rest. When we are done I will give George a lift myself.
- George: Thank you. Could I see you tomorrow at eight o›clock, Jamal?
- Jamal: Alright, I'll leave now, peace be upon you.
- Gerges: Jamal is a great man, how did you meet him?
- George: Through his brother in Britain. I must tell you something that he said about you that you do not know: before our arrival he said that you were very respectable, despite the fact that you were extremely cruel to him, and he thought that you were a Christian.
- Gerges: In Islam we have to be just, even with our enemies. God the Exalted says: [O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah and be just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is well-acquainted with what you do] (Al-Maidah: 8). But let's leave this matter now, we need to discuss contracts first and then begin interviews. According to what you said, your time is limited.
- George: Okay, but I want to discuss with you your acceptance of Islam later.
- Gerges: At lunch or during our return to the hotel.

At six o›clock, George and Gerges left the employment company to return to the hotel. Following a day filled with interviews, contracts and agreements, George rode with Gerges in his car.

- Gerges: You've made a great effort in one day, and finished all the interviews. How were the ones you met?
- George: Actually, they exceeded my expectations. I admired the interviewees' social nature, beside their professional qualities; such a mixture is not common in Britain. Thanks to your efforts, my job has become easier.
- Gerges: What is the next stage?
- George: I don›t want to rush. I still have two more interviews tomorrow and the day after in another two offices, after that I can make my final decision.
- Gerges: Alright, it is not good to rush.
- George: In fact, you made me remember my problem...How grateful I am to Jamal, this great person... But as you say it is not good to rush, then why did you rush and adopt Islam?
- Gerges: Ha ha! Now don›t be quick in jumping to conclusions. Who said to you I rushed? Rather, I was very late in changing.

- George: How?
- Gerges: I took a long time until I was convinced about Islam. The one who persuaded me was the owner of the company, although he did not pressurize, order or bother me to adopt Islam. After I was convinced, I actually waited six months before declaring my faith, and this was when I really delayed changing.
- George: Six months is not a long time and rather quick to make such a serious decision!
- Gerges: What if I had died in a state of disbelief, and became disgraced in the life of this world and the Hereafter?
- George: Wow! It appears you always make a connection between this world and the Hereafter, but could you point out to me what is the disgrace in this world and the Hereafter?
- Gerges: As for the disgrace of this world: I didn’t feel tranquil, relaxed and happy until I finally declared my faith. You may wonder at this, but this is the truth. The meanings of monotheism to God, servitude to him and resorting to him only, without taking partners with Him, makes the soul content even if one has problems in life. Some of our relatives abandoned me; rather they tried to harm me.
- George: Do monotheism and servitude make the heart happy?!
- Gerges: Yes, just as paganism, polytheism and the trinity makes one feel unhappy. As for the disgrace in the Hereafter: I don›t want to meet Allah while I associate partners with Him. In spite of His grace and mercy, God does not forgive associating partners with Him, but He forgives everything else. God was kind to me as I didn›t die before I made my declaration of faith.
- George: Your words are strange!
- Gerges: Why? What’s strange about them?
- George: Let’s complete our conversation in the hotel restaurant, now that we have arrived.
- Gerges: I hope you will allow me to leave as I›m late. Let›s discuss the matter later!
- George: Do you mean I›ll have the meal alone!
- Gerges: Sorry, if it doesn›t bother you.
- George: Never mind, excuse me.

(2)

George went upstairs to his room and put down his belongings and his brief case. He went downstairs directly to the hotel restaurant as he felt very hungry. While he was having supper, a person wearing strange clothes stood beside him.

- Ramy: Hi, sorry to bother you. My name is Ramy; can I have a word with you?
- George: Okay.
- Ramy: Were you the one taken to hospital yesterday?
- George: Yes.
- Ramy: Be very careful of the thieves in this country.
- George: Okay...well, you're a bit late because I was robbed yesterday.
- Ramy: I know that, that›s why I›m reminding you.
- George: How do you know this?
- Ramy: I know everything through the spirits
- George: Which spirits?
- Ramy: This is one of my secrets.
- George: Do you know what will happen to me tomorrow?
- Ramy: Yes, I do.
- George: But doesn't this contradict reason and religion?
- Ramy: Do you know our religion better than us, are you a Muslim?
- George: No, but it is in your holy Qur'an that the unknown is only known by God.
- Ramy: This is a type of science; I'm not interested in any religion at all.
- George: I am not Muslim, but I think this is superstition not science. This is the case for Christians but I›m not sure about Muslims!
- Ramy: Ha ha! Italy is the land of Christianity. Do you know the number of fortune-tellers there is more than the number of priests!?
- George: I know that superstitions in the West spread quickly due to our search for the spirituality which we lack, but I believe it is just a superstition. Can you convince me that this science is correct?
- Ramy: Yes, I can.
- George: I was robbed twice yesterday; do you know who robbed me?
- Ramy: Could you give me your hand to look at it?
- George: Okay.
- Ramy: The one who robbed you is very close to you.
- George: Wonderful, you seem to really know the unseen, what did he rob me of?

- Ramy: He robbed you of something very dear to you.
- George: Where did he put it?
- Ramy: Somewhere near here... or far away, I need only $10 to give to the spirit that will tell me its whereabouts
- George: If you can tell me where my wallet that was stolen is, I›ll give you $100 from it!.
- Ramy: Okay, but first, give me the $10.
- George: I don›t have it on me now.
- Ramy: The good spirit told me if you don›t pay me now, you will face major problems.
- George: Ha ha! I have finished my meal, now you tell that good spirit of yours that he is a liar, and my wallet is with me and was not stolen from me; I was only kidding with you.

George went back up to his room while laughing at the fortune-teller who had sat with him. He was wondering why the number of fortune-tellers in Rome was more than the number of priests. Does this indicate that religion is so weak and contradicts logic, reason and science so much that there are more imposters and people who rely on superstitions than priests? He opened his computer to check his email that he didn’t read the day before and found a message from Janolka:

“Dear George,

I read your message and I felt sorry about what happened to you, but I must point out two matters; the first, we must make a distinction between religion and ideas or schools of thought and the behavior of some of its individuals, except when they do things that the religion encourages. The second, I co-exist with Muslims here and all-in-all they do not tend to rob, in spite of their poverty and their weak regime and tribal disagreements. The temptation they have is great, but they still abstain from stealing because of their religion, as Islam forbids them from stealing, and not out of fear of the regime. But for us, on the other hand, we are mostly prevented by the regime, not by ethics or religion. When the regime becomes broken, chaos prevails, and you know western history better than I. Finally, I would like to tell you, in spite of my stubborn nature, I am about to enter Islam, although I still have some arrangements and matters to sort out,

Janolka”

He replied to him:

"Dear Janolka,

Thank you for being sympathetic towards me. I don't really know what to say to you; I thought I was robbed and accused my Muslim friend and wronged him, but later found my wallet. So my Muslim friend's great character appeared and he embarrassed me with his moral fiber, chivalry and good manners: I did not know how to apologize to him for my foolishness! As for me entering Islam, I do not know why but I feel it is not possible, at this time at least, for me; I still have considerable doubts about it, such as the status of women and human rights, and the cultural level of this religion. I hope you can benefit me with what you find in this regard,

George"

Then, he opened a message from Levvi:

"Dear George,

I felt sorry for what happened to you and I warned you, but maybe what happened is good and serves as a lesson to slow down your and my fiancé Habib's rush towards Islam. Is there anything we can do for you? You can come to Tel Aviv anytime; we will welcome you with open arms and we all will be happy with you and try and save you from the terrorist Muslims. I am anxiously waiting for you,

Levvi"

He replied to her:

"Dear Levvi,

I miss you very much, and cannot do without your advice at all. But I really do not know what to say to you; I thought I was robbed and accused my Muslim friend and wronged him, but then I found my wallet. My Muslim friend's great character shone through and he embarrassed me with his moral fiber, chivalry and good manners. I reiterate to you that I am not rushing into Islam. In spite of my admiration for many of its rulings and beliefs, I am not clear about other points. I congratulate you on your engagement to Habib and take it from me; you will not find a person like him with his personality, intellect and understanding. Try to have a talk with him and you will find out that he has many characteristics that you will not find in another person. I wish I could come to you in Tel Aviv, but I assure you that I am welcomed here just as much as I was in Tel Aviv; I hope to visit you soon,

George"

Then he found a message from Katrina among the incoming messages:

"My darling George,

Adam told me about the robbery that happened to you, George, and he also told me about Bassem's brother when I visited him in the hospital yesterday, and I'm sorry about that. I want you to be sure about something though, as over the past two days I have acquired some knowledge of Islam that Bassem told me, and I find it highly unlikely that his brother would have stolen from you. But how are you now?

Katrina"

He replied to her:

"My darling Katrina,

- He did not rob me, the evidence is conclusive, so you can assure yourself of this fact. There was a misunderstanding on my part. Please apologize to Bassem on behalf of me. By the way, is it reasonable for Katrina, the devout catholic, to want to learn about Islam? Or did the holy Qur'an or the book "My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam" which you were afraid of reading influence you? I miss you very much, darling,

George"

He kept browsing the incoming messages from his friends answering his questions which he had sent to them, and then he summarized them and wrote to all of them:

"Regarding terrorism:

Habib: Terrorism has no religion at all.

Levvi: If the Muslims who killed my father are not considered as terrorists, then I do not know the meaning of terrorism at all.

Katrina: There is no terrorism in Islam.

Adam: The terrorist is he who occupies land to plunder its blessings.

- Tom: Terrorism is a veil used by terrorists to intimidate people with what they do not like.
- Janolka: The most serious form of terrorism is intellectual terrorism; it is terrorizing people from even thinking, but Islam encourages thinking.
- George: Up until now I have not seen any connection between terrorism and Islam except through our mass media.

As for women:

Katrina: Women have a special status in Islam, albeit I do not understand why they wear hijab until now.

Levvi: It is not worse than Judaism or Christianity.

- Tom: I need to do more research on this matter. In the holy Qur'an when Mary's mother gave birth to her, she said: [“O my Lord! I have given birth to a female child,” - and Allah knew better what she brought forth. - “And the male is not like the female, and I have named her Mary, And I seek refuge with you (Allah) for her and for her offspring from Satan, the outcast.”] (Al-Imran: 36)

Habib: It does not oppress her.

- Janolka: We demand equality between men and women in our culture, in spite of the evident differences and the bad consequences of such equality, rather such equality is impossible. But Islam treats her justly and gives her the rights due to her.

Adam: Women have not been honored by any religion as they have been in Islam, and if you wish, make a comparison of women in Islam with any heavenly or man-made religion.

- George: I still have some doubts about hijab, handshaking between men and women and inheritance, etc. I'll try to understand these points.

Now that your answers about Islam are mostly positive, my question will be direct: what is stopping you from adopting Islam? Answer me in depth and realistically in two days please,

George”

He browsed Tom's Facebook profile, but he did not find anything meaningful; then he browsed Adam's Facebook page and found a new episode of “Lessons of my friend searching for happiness: lesson 5.”

“I have said over and over to you that my friend is in the last stages of his journey, and I think he is greatly convinced that Islam is the route to his happiness. He will not find answers to his major questions anywhere except in Islam, but guidance is only from God. His wife wept deeply because of her love for Islam and I do not know if she has entered Islam or not. She returned to her home while weeping and I pray that God will show her the route to happiness in this world and the Hereafter. As for my friend, as much as I have confidence in his mind and understanding, I fear about the Muslims of the present time. He went to Egypt to learn about Islam, but regrettably he said he was robbed by one of them. He did not understand the difference between a fault or a defect being in Islam itself, or being with the Muslims? I think he is very truthful though, and he will be able to get over this plight and adopt

Islam. I'll summarize the lessons in the following points:

Islam is impeccable, but regrettably, Muslims make a lot of mistakes.

Making the decision to embrace Islam needs considerable courage and a deep understanding, and my friend needs a lot of both.

We should not hasten in making people adopt Islam and travel along the path to happiness; they must be completely convinced first.

We do not have, in the route to happiness, anything to conceal; it is complete and convincing from every side.

Every person granted the path to happiness from God should point it out to others in a gentle way, but guidance is and will always be only from God.

I wish my friend all that is good and I really do not know whether God will guide him or not?

Wait for the sixth lesson...

Adam"

Adam's excerpt on Katrina annoyed George a lot; he was wondering if it was reasonable for Karina to adopt Islam? Impossible! Maybe she was complimenting Adam and he misunderstood her. Perhaps Adam was lying to show his page readers that he could make a Catholic adopt his religion, he thought. Her last message yesterday did not indicate that she was going to embrace Islam. He reviewed the history of Adam's article; he found it was written two hours earlier, while Katrina's message to him was yesterday morning. Is it reasonable that she adopted Islam in the evening, and if so why didn't she tell him?

Katrina's last messages held only positive views about Islam; she even made a distinction between Islam and Muslims concerning the robbery. Is this not evidence that she has embraced Islam? But Katrina was always so zealous for Catholicism and she loves Christ very much and devoted herself to him by serving the church. Is it possible that she might leave all this?

George spent his night thinking deeply… Sometimes he thought that it was his wife›s right to embrace whatever religion she wanted, however at the same time he felt furious with her, and then other times he denied the news of her adoption of Islam. He was wondering if he should tell her if he wanted to adopt Islam, or if having to tell her, while she hadn't told him, would be a form of gender inequality! He was about to contact her more than one time, but he stopped because he felt that she was able to call him and tell him herself or at least send

him a mail if there was any news. In the end he concluded that she had not made a final decision yet.

(3)

George woke at 7 a.m., tired and troubled; he had a quick shower and took the lift down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast. After he had finished, he sat in the reception area waiting for Jamal to come so that the two of them could go together to the employment company.

They arrived at the company and requested that the secretary arrange for them to see the manager...

- The secretary: You can enter to see Mr. Mustafa in a few minutes.
- George: Jamal, the manager’s name is Mustafa, what does it mean?
- Jamal: It is one of the Prophet›s names, meaning God has chosen and selected him, and Muslims name their sons after him with this name.
- George: You mean he is a Muslim!?
- Jamal: Yes, it is a Muslim name.

After two minutes had passed, the secretary told them that Mr. Mustafa was ready for them.

- Mustafa: Welcome.
- Jamal: May I take leave from you and I’ll meet you, George, at twelve o’clock?
- George: I’m not sure how much time I will need with Mr. Mustafa though.
- Mustafa: According to your e-mail and what we have prepared, I expect to finish at two o’clock, or you can come to us again tomorrow to continue.
- George: Okay, then I›ll see you Jamal, if it’s alright with you, at two o›clock.
- Mustafa: But I suggest we have dinner together, now that you are our guest today.
- Jamal: Oh, but my mother asked me to bring George to have lunch at our home this afternoon.
- Mustafa: So have supper with me then.
- George: Alright, it›s settled then. I›ll see you at two o›clock Jamal.
- Mustafa: And I›ll pass by at seven o›clock at the hotel so we can go out for dinner.

- Jamal: Okay, I'll take your leave.

Jamal left and Mustafa turned to George.

- Mustafa: It seems that you two are very close friends.
- George: Yes, I›ve only known him for a short time but he is a man in the true sense of the word.
- Mustafa: As you›ve only known him for a short time, I should warn you of those religious Islamists.
- George: How did you know he is religious and an Islamist?
- Mustafa: It is evident from the way he looks.
- George: What are you warning me of?
- Mustafa: I warn you of being killed or robbed and the like, as they see you as a disbeliever who must be hated and also killed.
- George: Thank you for this advice. From which sect of Muslims are you, then?
- Mustafa: I am a Muslim, but an enlightened one. I lived a period of my life in America and learned many cultural habits Islam lacks.
- George: Give me an example?
- Mustafa: I›ve learned democracy, the acceptance of different views, and accepting people who have different religions.
- George: You're flattering us, but I am surprised at your speech because we, the Christians, also see you as being backward disbelievers!
- Mustafa: Mustafa felt confused, then he said: in fact, we are backward. Your point of view about us is correct in this regard.
- George: Maybe. Anyhow, we have to begin our work.
- Mustafa: Alright… let›s begin, but I assure you that dealing with people who are more open-minded to other cultures guarantees success for you, and keeps you away from what you would not like.
- George: Unquestionably, especially if he loves his nation and society.
- Mustafa: Thank you. I›ve prepared a number of employees for you with the specifications that came to me in the e-mail.
- George: Good, how many are there, and what is your evaluation of them?

- Mustafa: Eight people at first, and most of them are open-minded to different world cultures.
- George: What about their occupational and professional abilities, and their specializations?
- Mustafa: Not bad. Meet them yourself; do you want to begin the interviews?
- George: Okay, I hope you›ll give me their CVs before they enter.
- Mustafa: Here you are. (Mustafa hands George the resumes.) I›ll let the secretary know so that they will enter the meeting room one after another, in the same order as that of the resumes that are in your hand. Let's go to the meeting room together and then I›ll go back to my office to wait until you finish your meetings.

George met the eight people whom Mustafa had recommended. He finished at quarter to two.

- George: Thank you, I have finished the interviews.
- Mustafa: What is your opinion of them?
- George: Good, I›ll make my decision after finishing the company›s interviews tomorrow. What is your opinion about completing our conversation while having supper this evening, especially since Jamal will arrive in a few minutes?
- Mustafa: Well, I›ve prepared for you something you will enjoy and find pleasant. And until Jamal comes, did you particularly like any of the eight people you met?
- George: Many drew my attention and I found that many of them were suitable.
- Mustafa: You will find all that satisfies you today.
- George: How?
- Mustafa: We›ll complete our discussion while having supper.

George left the company to find Jamal waiting for him. He rode with him to Jamal's house..

- Jamal: How was your meeting today?
- George: Not bad.
- Jamal: It seems as though you weren›t comfortable!
- George: I was not comfortable at all!
- Jamal: Why?

- George: He brought me a group of servants to work for me, although I wanted professional programmers.
- Jamal: Maybe he did not understand what you wanted.
- George: He understood me very well, but he thought I only wanted to gratify my desires. Imagine, I met eight people; five women, only two of whom were programmers, and three men, only two of them specializing in computers.
- Jamal: According to which criterion did he choose the people for you?
- George: Mostly on beauty, elegance and hypocrisy!
- Jamal: I understand what you mean and apologize for this, but we, the Egyptians, are not like that!
- George: Maybe. I wish I didn›t have to meet him again, albeit there was a man and woman from the group I met who were very distinguished.
- Jamal: Now that you have promised him, have supper with him today and request that he arranges for you to meet those you found suitable.
- George: But that will happen after I finish the last meeting tomorrow.
- Jamal: Most things a person does involve some difficulties. We will arrive to the house very soon, as we›ve entered the area of my home. And I apologize as we live in a poor area, not in a five or four star area.
- George: I appreciate this, and I repeat my thanks and gratitude to you and your mother.
- Jamal: I can›t go any further with the car because the streets, as you see, are very narrow. We›ll have to take the rest on foot, but don›t worry, it›s very close.

They arrived at Jamal's apartment which was on the third floor of a block of flats that seemed to be very old. Jamal welcomed George in his home and led him to a small well-arranged room prepared for receiving guests.

- Jamal: Have a seat. Excuse me please; I'll be back in a few minutes.

George sat thinking about the furniture of the simple room. He liked simplicity, and from the moment he entered the poor area until they arrived at Jamal's flat a feeling of awe had filled him. He wondered to himself: "Is this really his house? Or did he bring me here for some other reason?" He remembered Mustafa's words when he told him that those Islamists are killers and robbers, and they like to retaliate. But he laughed at his strange ideas and remembered

Jamal's chivalrous attitude when he accused him of stealing his wallet. While waiting for him, Jamal returned bringing with him a large tray full of various plates that held different food dishes, and he put the tray in front of George...

- Jamal: Sorry if I took long. Please eat.
- George: The food looks delicious, thank you. It must have cost you a lot.
- Jamal: No, it didn't cost me anything; it's not from me, it's from my mother. She's the one who invited you to have dinner here, and she'll pop in soon to greet you.
- George: It's unusual for the host not to be present to greet the guest on their arrival.
- Jamal: The woman is greatly honored in Islam - more than you think. She is like a queen who is attended to. I am willing to do anything my mother wants, whatever it may be.
- George: Whatever is may be?
- Jamal: Yes, as much as I can. God made a connection with being obedient to Him to being obedient to one›s parents, especially the mother.

Bassem's mother came and stood at the door. She knocked lightly and then began speaking in colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

- Bassem's mother: Peace be upon you my son, you have honored us with your presence here, and Bassem speaks highly of you.
- Jamal: My mother sends her greetings of peace to you George and welcomes you, and she said to you that you have honored us with your presence here, and that Bassem speaks highly of you.
- George: Please tell her I say thank you. I don›t know what to say… why doesn›t she sit with us? Have a seat with us...
- Jamal: My mother just came to welcome you and tell you we are all at your service as you are our guest.
- George: You have overwhelmed me with your generosity, but why didn›t she sit with us and why didn›t she shake my hand?
- Jamal: In Islam our women don›t sit with men unless there is some need to do so, and they don›t shake hands with men except those they are forbidden to marry.
- George: As I told you earlier, I met five women; four of them shook my hands

but I was surprised when one of them refused to shake hands. However they all sat with me.

- Jamal: What did she say, the one who refused to shake hands?
- George: She apologized, saying that she doesn›t like shaking hands with men, that›s all.
- Jamal: So what is your opinion about her?
- George: I respect her wishes, especially since two of the other women shook hands in a impolite way, and also their looks and gestures were downright rude.
- Jamal: Is it possible for me to travel to Britain and shake hands with the Queen there?
- George: What is the connection? The law only allows seven types of people to shake hands with the Queen.
- Jamal: Didn›t I tell you that in our religion the woman is an honored queen? Islam doesn›t allow men to shake hands with women at all except if they belong to one of ten specific relatives; the father, grandfather, husband, father of the husband, son, brother, paternal uncle, maternal uncle, nephew and grandson. This is out of respect and reverence for her; we do it out of reverence for our queen and to keep her away from any possibly corrupt situations.
- George: Ha ha! An honored queen! Then why did those women shake hands with me in the interview?
- Jamal: Regretfully, a lot of Muslims do not take their religion seriously, but Islam is innocent of them.
- George: Oh yes, and Adam also didn›t shake hands with Katrina at all; now I understand! Does it bother you when I speak about women in Islam?
- Jamal: Do you expect me to be annoyed when you are speaking about the queen!?
- George: Let me ask you a question: why are women only given half the inheritance of men? And then you claim that she is a queen. You only need to make her equal with man; and not make her this so-called queen.
- Jamal: Do all the employees that you employ earn the same salary?
- George: It seems that you are trying to change the subject
- Jamal: Not at all! I am speaking about the crux of the matter.

- George: Of course not, do you expect me to give the manager the same as the courier?
- Jamal: Do you wrong the courier when you give him less than the manager?
- George: No, I am just with him.
- Jamal: That is why Islam established justice between men and women, and among all mankind, but not equality. For this reason the woman is given half of what is given to the man with regards to inheritance as the man has to spend on her, but she does not have to spend on him; this is complete and utter justice.
- George: Why? Doesn›t your wife pay half of the household expenses?
- Jamal: Spending on the home is obligatory upon the man, and the queen is to be served.
- George: Excuse me…but this means the woman does not learn and work.
- Jamal: Who said that? She should learn just like the man, and it is her right to work.
- George: What about the salary she receives?
- Jamal: It is solely her right, and she does not have to spend it on anything for the home.
- George: Ha! Ha! Then, economically, women get more profit than men.
- Jamal: No, not more than men, but according to justice, as just as she is different from the man with regards to her nature and the jobs she performs, her rules and obligations differ too.
- George: A beautiful description of justice, but concerning another topic, don›t you see that the hijab is a form of social injustice against her?
- Jamal: No, it is a form of honor and reverence.
- George: How is that the case when she is wrapped up in these clothes that screen her beauty and femininity?
- Jamal: How were your queens and princesses fifty years ago?!
- George: What are you trying to say?
- Jamal: Answer my question.
- George: Queens and princesses had full rights.
- Jamal: No, I mean what did they wear, their clothes?

- George: Are you trying to tell me that they wore similar clothes to what female Muslims wear today
- Jamal: Yes, there is no doubt about that. And isn't that the type of dress worn by nuns too?
- George: But we developed, and therefore women›s clothing developed too.
- Jamal: First: your nuns' clothes did not develop, in fact – I'm sorry to say - their position in church diminished. And your women›s clothes did not develop, but - I am again sorry to say - they regressed and became degraded. Read the percentage of sexual harassments, adulteries, abortions and other catastrophes as a result of this degradation.
- George: But there is also sexual harassment etc. in Muslim countries!
- Jamal: We too are human beings and make mistakes, but we do not have even a small percentage of such problems compared to you. Regrettably, most of such problems arise here due to the people imitating you.
- George: What do you mean?
- Jamal: Can I use figures and statistics? I like referring to them very much.
- George: Figures make matters clear and are very convincing. Go ahead.
- Jamal: Statistics indicate that 90% of unmarried women practice adultery often or from time to time in Europe and America. In America, the percentage of pregnant school students because of adultery reached 48% at one of the secondary schools there. The official American statistics show that a percentage of 87.8% of all the secondary school students have had sexual intercourse, 22% of them before the age of 13; while 60% of the newly born in Sweden are children from adultery, their fathers and mothers not being married to each other.
- George: That's enough, I know that and many other disasters in our western societies, but this happens in the whole world! Aren't you like us?!
- Jamal: As I mentioned to you, regrettably, a lot of Muslims have followed the same way. The more the man is away from religion, the nearer he is to falling into such errors. But the difference in figures between the two nations is not just large, but very large.
- George: Do you want to say that your clerics don›t marry or are monastic like the priests and popes?

- Jamal: I told you many times, we don›t have clerics in Islam, in fact even the Prophet married.
- George: Yes, I read that your Prophet married and I was amazed about this fact! Excuse me, where is your wife?! Aren't you married?!
- Jamal: At school, she is a physics teacher at high school. She works from twelve to six p.m., and she will arrive soon.
- George: Tell me truthfully, do you force her to wear hijab?!
- Jamal: Definitely not.
- George: Then why do you say women have to wear hijab and you do not make your wife wear it? It is very bad to use religion just to follow our personal whims; not applying it to all our life!
- Jamal: I didn't force her because she wore it out of her own choice. I agree with you it is wrong to use religion just to follow our personal whims. Rather, the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade that.
- George: You mean she wore hijab without you making her wear it?
- Jamal: Of course.
- George: What made her wear it?!
- Jamal: Her religion and the order from her Lord, as well as protecting herself.
- George: From what does she protect herself?
- Jamal: From falling prey to those statistics! Ha ha! If you want new figures and statistics, I have lots.
- George: That's enough; I have a lot of such statistics. But sorry, in Britain we hear a lot about Egyptian singers and dancers?!
- Jamal: Yes… as I said to you, the more we are away from the religion, the more we imitate you, regrettably.
- George: Why is it regrettable?
- Jamal: I don›t mean to insult you, but I think that the position of your women is degrading, so much so that many of your intellectuals have mentioned the importance of looking into the disaster that the society is heading towards.
- George: There are several disasters! Which disaster do you mean exactly?!
- Jamal: Why should man marry if he gets what he wants without marrying? This

situation abolishes and spoils the family system, which destroys the strongest societies in the world and annihilates them.

- George: Explain to me more.
- Jamal: With complete frankness, isn›t the bringing up of a dog better and less costly than the bringing up of a son for a lot of people? Isn›t the mistress less costly and more interesting than the wife?
- George: Only to people whose innate nature is corrupt.
- Jamal: You›re right, but some societies have reached that stage. Do you know that the birth rate in some societies has reached to less than one child for every woman; these societies will dwindle and disappear sooner or later.
- George: Ha ha! You have even overpowered Europe with the number of births.
- Jamal: The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: «Marry the woman who gives birth a lot and is loving.»
- George: Islam lays down guidelines even for such details!
- Jamal: Islam is a totally comprehensive religion and deals with all areas of life, that is why the soul becomes balanced and feels happy and comfortable with it. And no aspect of life is allowed to prevail at the expense of another as in such a case the person would become tired.
- George: Wow! There are many details in Islam! But is this not rather a fault and disadvantage?!
- Jamal: What do you mean?!
- George: These particulars tire man out when he follows them; they are just additional restrictions to life!
- Jamal: Which is better: a country in which law is enforced like Britain, or a country which abounds with chaos?
- George: I understood what you mean, but the good law is the one that gives large space for innovation and interpretative judgment.
- Jamal: It is as if you described Islam! Islam opened up very wide horizons for us to develop innovate ideas, use our imagination and think deeply. It is for this reason there are verses in the Qur›an which encourage contemplation, looking at the greatness of nature, history, different biographies, and so forth.
- George: Wouldn›t you be afraid of people contemplating and finding the deficiencies and weaknesses of your religion?
- Jamal: Only man-made and distorted religions have these problems; but as for

Muslims, the more they think deeply, the more they are religious and faithful. And regretfully, the less they think deeply, the less they are religious.

- George: I admire your confidence in your religion.
- Jamal: Could I ask you a question?
- George: Sure!
- Jamal: What is stopping you from embracing Islam?! I feel that you are convinced by it!

George felt confused because of Jamal's question and grasped his fingers firmly. He remembered what Adam had written about Katrina weeping and the need for courage to make any decision. He also remembered what Janolka had written in his last message. He sighed deeply and remembered that this was the question that he had sent to his friends. He wondered to himself: "Is it weakness, hesitancy, ignorance, or being slow and careful and not hasty?" Whatever the reason, he had to answer himself before even answering Jamal. He turned to Jamal:

- George: Would you allow me not to answer your question now?
- Jamal: It is up to you. I just mentioned that to you because I want only the good and what›s best for you.
- George: Thank you. I›ll answer you in two or three days.
- Jamal: It›s not important to answer me; the most important thing is to answer your soul and its questions. Regrettably, the material life has converted us into machines that become tired if they think. And as a result, humanity lives in misery.

George sighed when he heard the phrase 'when you answer your soul', and remembered the words of the old man that he had met. Then he said:

- George: It's as if you are describing me.
- Jamal: Sorry, I did not intend to offend you, but this is the state of humanity when they turn away from God. God said: [But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Qur'an nor acts on its teachings), verily, for him is a life of hardship, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection." (Taha:124) and God also said: [And whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam; and whomsoever He wills to send astray, He makes his breast closed and constricted, as if he is climbing up to the sky. Thus, Allah puts the wrath on those who believe not.] (Al-Anam:125)
- George: How cruel!

- Jamal: Forgive me. I did not mean to sound cruel; in reality the one who goes away from God is being cruel to himself. However I don't mean your situation right now, but I mean the rest of your life!
- George: What do you mean?
- Jamal: People escape from their lives in different ways. There are some people who escape with amusement and drinking wine, others escape with some religious matters which gratify a small part of their spiritual hunger. Some of them escape with empty philosophies; while others escape to the unknown, to avoid thinking about the matter at all. I ask you again with all my love and sincere well wishes: what is stopping you from having happiness in this world and the Hereafter?!
- George: I told you I›ll answer you in two or three days.

While they were in the middle of their conversation they heard the sound of the door opening, and so Jamal took leave from George for a little while.

- Jamal: One moment, please. My wife ‘Aisha has just arrived.
- George: Do you mind if I speak to her a little?
- Jamal: Let me ask her.
- George: Ask her what?
- Jamal: I know she doesn›t like to speak with men and I don›t like to force her to do anything she doesn›t like. Just a minute, let me ask her.

Jamal left the room leaving George in a state of amazement as what had happened that day had shaken him violently. He had begun to feel as though he had gone astray and he did not know what to do. All day he had kept asking himself, «Why did I come to Egypt? Even my questions seem to tire me out. What do I want? Why am I alive? Why is there so much tiredness…ah…»

While he was distracted with his questions, Jamal and his wife entered. He looked at her and saw she was wearing hijab and that only a small part of her face was showing.

- Jamal: This is my wife. What would you like to ask her?
- ‘Aisha: Jamal told me that you wanted to adopt Islam, and you have questions about the status of women in Islam.
- George: I didn›t say that I wanted to adopt Islam at all, albeit I would like to know about the status of women in Islam.
- ‘Aisha: Why do you want to know about the status of women in Islam if you don›t

want to adopt Islam?

- George: Just to know.
- ‘Aisha: Knowledge that doesn’t benefit man is worthless, and knowledge that doesn’t elevate the status of its seeker is useless. Profound knowledge leads one to revere God. God says: [It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Almighty, Oft-forgiving.] (Fatir: 28)
- George: I mean I only want to know. Do you consider merely knowing and having knowledge as being faulty and wrong?
- ‘Aisha: As for us, any knowledge that does not result in action is worthless, and I think futility and not having aims and purposes indicates that one is ill in one’s mind and far from religion, you know this problem very well.
- George: What do you mean by the phrase ‘as for us?’
- ‘Aisha: I mean as for us as Muslims. Let me talk about what you want, as I am sure you wouldn’t ask questions unless you wanted to adopt Islam.
- George: How are you sure?!
- ‘Aisha: I hope this will not bother you, but God the Exalted says: [Perhaps (often) will those who disbelieve wish that they were Muslims (those who have submitted themselves to Allah’s Will in Islam Islamic Monotheism, this will be on the Day of Resurrection)].] (Al-Hijr: 2) there is no intelligent person, amongst those who do not believe in monotheism and have not submitted themselves to God, who can accept the contradictions of different people’s whims and the contradictions in the distorted religions.
- George: What do you mean by intelligent?!
- ‘Aisha: The person who can›t think well can overlook the contradictions in his life and religion, and also the questions of his soul, and just occupy himself with marginal issues, but…
- George: But what?!
- ‘Aisha: But Jamal told me you are intelligent, as his brother Bassem told him that and he also noticed it himself.
- George: Thank you...
- ‘Aisha: Let’s tackle our subject “women in Islam”, but where should we begin?
- George: Begin wherever you want, and I›ll ask you all I want.
- ‘Aisha: Before Islam it was the custom of the Arabs to bury their newborn girls alive so as to kill them, as they viewed women as evil omens.

- George: What? How disgusting! Utter backwardness and cruelty, if you ask me!
- ‘Aisha: Yes, absolutely, and you are correct. But this view was not restricted to the Arabs, as philosophers used to hold meetings to discuss matters such as does a woman have a soul like that of a man›s? Does she have a human spirit or an animal one? In the end they conclude that women do have souls, but to a much lesser degree than a man. As for the Roman man, he had the authority to sell his wife or divorce her, and to recognize his child or not. And women in Greece did not inherit at all.
- George: Regrettably you are right - a dirty history!
- ‘Aisha: All heavenly religions brought justice for women, but regretfully the Jews changed that. Its distorted book became filled with made-up sexual indulgences and great injustices against women.
- George: Levvi talked to me about that very much, and I read a lot about it.
- ‘Aisha: Who is Levvi?!
- George: A very respectable Jewish woman.
- ‘Aisha: I wish she becomes truly happy and honored by embracing Islam.
- George: I›m not so sure if she would consider embracing Islam. Anyhow, please continue...
- ‘Aisha: God is the one who has the key that opens people’s hearts. Let’s continue: Christianity also distorted the justice God brought for women. Regrettably Christianity became filled with insults against women.
- George: Good presentation.
- ‘Aisha: Islam came after that and honored woman more than any other religion. And nothing has been distorted from this religion as God is the One who preserves it.
- George: I am totally convinced that Islam has not been distorted and I do have questions I wish to ask, but I would like you to continue with what you want to say first.
- ‘Aisha: Woman had never felt as dignified in the world as she felt when Islam came. Europe learned from its interactions with Muslims how Islam honors its women, and they learned justice and many sciences. But they were shocked by the distortions in their holy books and teachings of the church, thus they revolted against the church. Regrettably, they did not embrace Islam, but instead they searched for a system to honor women, and their limited mind drove them to

spread the idea of equality.

- George: For that reason the human mind became better than religions?
- ‘Aisha: Of course, they could not change woman’s innate character, temper and role to suit their false equality. They decided to burden her with the man›s jobs along with her job. And what is surprising is that she works a man›s jobs as well as hers but only receives half or a quarter of the wages or salary! However I wish men reducing her wages and burdening her with more than she can bear was the only problem, but unfortunately they also exploited her and took from her what they wanted without marrying her, so she turned from being a maintained respectable wife to a shabby mistress. Institutions of equality and human rights appeared and tried to change this poor state. It demanded that she had equal wages and salary, but they were only able to achieve that ostensibly and not in reality. They set conditions so that her husband would not take her rights. Afterwards, they found out that the one who took her rights was a lover who had no legal obligations to her, in lieu of the husband.
- George: What you are saying does not apply to everywhere in the West and for all its different cases.
- ‘Aisha: Yes, it applies only to a large part of it as still there are people whose manners prevent them from acting like this. But the disaster is that it drove the women, in the name of equality, enjoyment and liberation, away from being under men›s control so that they became more dissolute and decadent until she reached a level that even animals would be ashamed of and would not accept.
- George: What do you mean?
- ‘Aisha: Sorry if my words were harsh or if you thought I was insulting you, but what I mean is that women are regrettably seen as a plaything to spoil, misguide and corrupt in the name of equality, and her rights have been taken. But if this is not the case, then how do you explain the appearance of sex channels, sex movies and the sex trade?
- George: It can be explained as a form of admiration of this beautiful creature!
- ‘Aisha: And so you acknowledge that she is a beautiful creature which is different from man. Equality between the two is a form of injustice against her and him. As for me, I›ll explain the appearance of these problems being due to man in these societies; after plundering her financial rights and after feeling comfortable because she carries out both her job and his, he pillaged even her human rights

from her and turned her into a mere toy to play with. If that is not the case, then how do you explain the fact that naked or semi-naked women are displayed in shop windows in many countries in the same way a utensil, piece of furniture or a car is displayed!?

- George: These practices are in poor taste, but it does not represent all our society.
- ‘Aisha: It is at least legal and considered an accepted norm, whereas the hijab is forbidden legally and isn’t considered an accepted norm either, as even those who believe in it are prohibited from wearing it. The system permits the women to become a toy for display to be sold and bought but does not permit the Muslim women to wear hijab.
- George: I also don’t agree to the suppressive practices of some European countries.
- ‘Aisha: Then, you are a terrorist according to your criteria. I apologize for talking for so long, if it weren’t for my husband’s request to speak with you and to hopefully be a reason for you to embrace Islam, I wouldn’t have agreed to talk with you.
- George: I have some short questions that I have already asked two other people, but it is important that I hear the answer from a woman.
- ‘Aisha: Okay.
- George: You are a specialist in physics, i.e. one of the important subjects of the modern science which we gave to you and which raised your level of living, yet you wear hijab. Do you have to wear it? Or is it like our nun’s veil which does not represent chastity, but is just a form of traditional clothing which they wear? Or do you live in a perverted society, so you have to wear such cloths or else you will be prone to blackmail and harassment? Or why exactly do you wear it?
- ‘Aisha: First: sciences have been inherited, at one time or another, by everybody; as before you gave us modern science, we gave it to you when you were in total darkness. As for blackmail and harassment, you know that there is a direct connection between not veiling oneself and wearing skimpy clothes on the one hand, and such abusive harassments. If you want the statistics which support this, we have spoken about it earlier. As for me, I wear hijab because it is part of my religion and because I know that it will make me happy in this life and the Hereafter. In this world it gives comfort and makes me tranquil, and in the Hereafter it results in grace and bounties being given to me from God.

- George: You always seem to repeat ‘happiness in the world and the Hereafter’.
- ‘Aisha: Yes… A form of happiness that is not known to anyone but those who have actually experienced it.
- George: Maybe, but frankly would you accept Jamal marrying another wife, as your Prophet did?!
- ‘Aisha looked at Jamal who was silently standing beside her, then said:
- ‘Aisha: I don’t think Jamal would do that; I hope he doesn’t marry another woman.
- George: But your Prophet had many wives?
- ‘Aisha: Yes, he (peace be upon him) had many wives and one of his wives, the mother of the believers, had the same name as mine: ‘Aisha.
- George: So, why don’t you want Jamal to follow the example of his Prophet and marry another woman?!
- ‘Aisha: Islam did not request me not to be a woman! It›s my right to be jealous. Islam did not request me to be weak and not express my wishes. But I am sure that polygamy is better than having mistresses!
- George: And generally, not having polygamy is definitely the best choice.
- ‘Aisha: I think the need of some men to practice polygamy is part of human nature. Therefore, polygamy is not specific to Islam; rather it is present in all religions. The main difference is that the previous religions did not limit the number of wives. Prophet Solomon married one thousand women, Adam married thirteen wives and Prophet David married sixty nine wives. In Islam, polygamy is limited to only four wives.
- George: But we don›t allow polygamy now, and most systems ban it.
- ‘Aisha: Your holy book is full of polygamy and your priests have become tired trying to explain that. Some of them said that those who practiced polygamy, referring to the prophets, erred, while others said that it was allowed for a period of history in which wars were fierce and so there were more women than men. But this statement contradicts the present reality, and they forgot that wars are fiercer now. Others said that God changed His mind about that, God forbid; so they implied that He is uninformed and does not know the truth. Far is He above what they say.
- George: The most important point is that we have developed our religion, systems and laws to prevent polygamy.

- ‘Aisha: Great: «We developed our religion», but the truthful religion has to be valid for every time and place, and does not need to be developed, as if it needs to be developed it would be deficient. Allah says about Islam: [This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion,] (Al-Maidah: 3). We do not need to develop our religion because it is perfect just the way it is.
- George: But we have developed our systems and laws to prevent polygamy, which is a form of oppression.
- ‘Aisha: Yes, in most European and American countries you have explicitly prevented polygamy, but explicitly permitted mistresses!!!
- George: The point here is that we prevent polygamy.
- ‘Aisha: And since the life and nature of humans and society as a whole causes some men to need more than one wife, you allowed them to have mistresses. But a most serious problem is that polyandry is permitted in some nations instead of polygamy, and even wife-swapping. Undoubtedly, it is more honorable for the women if her husband has more than one wife than if he has a mistress or, I am sorry for the phrase, partakes in wife-swapping, which is disgusting.
- George: Good, but the modern science that you learnt and teach may greatly contradict your religion!
- ‘Aisha: Science contradicts our religion!? It seems as though you don›t know our religion or know anything about science! In any case, Jamal knows more than me regarding the relationship between science and religion. He requested that I discuss the topic of women with you, though I didn›t like the idea; I only did it because of Jamal’s request and because he said that it was a service for the religion. I would be grateful if you would excuse me now because I need to check my son and his homework.
- ‘Aisha left and George turned to Jamal with a perplexing smile…
- George: I congratulate you on your wife, although it would be better if she was a man and not a woman
- Jamal: Ha ha.
- George: What’s the matter? Why did you laugh?!
- Jamal: As if you know that a man is not like a woman, then why do you call for equality?! Take it from me, there is no human being who is gentler and more obedient to her husband than her because she is religious and the Prophet (peace be

upon him) advised her to obey me.

- George: But that is discrimination. Why didn’t your Prophet advise you to treat her gently?
- Jamal: But he did, in fact he (peace be upon him) said: «The best among you is the one who is the best towards his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives,» so basically he said that he is the best person with regard to treating his wives well. I am very happy with your discussions, but will you allow me to pray my afternoon prayer?
- George: It›s half past four now. If it›s okay with you, we can go out together for you to pray and for me to wander in Cairo for an hour. Then, you can come with me to meet Mustafa because he invited me for supper, though I don›t know why?

(4)

- George was in the car waiting for Jamal to finish his prayer, and when the pray had finished he looked at the faces of the people who were leaving the mosque. He noticed one person who had European features and so he waved at him. He got out of the car to greet him, but he answered him in poor English:
- William: Hello, I’m William, where are you from?
- George: I›m from Britain.
- Peter: And I›m Peter from Germany.
- George: But you were praying with the Muslims!
- Peter: Yes, I am a Muslim from Germany.
- George: You are actually from Germany, or are you an Egyptian living in Germany?
- Peter: Half of the Muslims in Europe are native Europeans, and I am one of them. The number of Muslims in Germany is more than four million, and they make up nearly 5% of the population.
- George: I believe that……the Muslims in our country are more than two million and they make up nearly 3% of the population, but my question is, were you a Christian?
- Peter: My parents were Christians but I was an atheist. Praise be to God, I adopted Islam and then felt happy. I›m only here to study Islam.
- George: What made you embrace Islam?
- Peter: That’s a question I am asked a lot. I can summarize my reason for adopting

Islam by saying that I was in search of truth, happiness and justice.

- George: Did you find them in Islam? And how did you find them?
- Peter: Yes, I found them in Islam, and if you want the full story, I›ll be happy to share it with you later, but I›m sorry I have an appointment with one of my friends now. This is my card which has all my details.
- George: Thank you, I'm sorry for taking your time.

George went back to the car and found Jamal waiting for him.

- George: When did you get back?
- Jamal: I saw you speaking with a man and didn't want to interrupt you. Anyhow, it is half past five, how much time is remaining before your appointment with Mustafa?
- George: Nearly an hour. But I›m really very tired right now and I wish I could just go back to the hotel to relax and take a rest. However Mustafa was keen on meeting me, I don›t know why, so I gave him the appointment and I don't want to break it.
- Jamal: Wonderful, the Qur›an and Prophet (peace be upon him) urged people to keep their promises, and maybe the meeting will be useful. I suggest, during the remaining hour, that we go on a tour on a boat on the Nile to let you rest for a while, seeing as the appointment is close to the Nile.
- George: A wonderful idea!

They went to the Nile and hired a boat for an hour. They took a quiet tour in which George felt relaxed and felt that the sudden amount of information he had acquired was rearranging itself. Then they went to the place where Mustafa had arranged to meet George.

- George: Thank you; it was a wonderful trip and just what I needed.
- Jamal: God willing, I hope you were able to relax a little.
- George: Yes, but the pressure of the questions I have still tire me whenever I try to relax.
- Jamal: What questions?
- George: Can I ask you a question?
- Jamal: Okay.
- George: Don›t you ever ask yourself why you were created?
- Jamal: Yes… a lot...
- George: How do you answer yourself? Or how do you evade this question?

- Jamal: Why would I evade it when I have a clear answer!?
- George: What is it?
- Jamal: God says: [And I (Allah) created not the jinn and humans except that they should worship me alone] (Al-Thariyat: 56)
- George: Do you mean I was created just to pray and fast for God!
- Jamal: No... You were created to worship God, referring to the entire comprehensive concept of worship, although prayer and fasting are important parts of worship.
- George: How?
- Jamal: Worship includes everything in our life; it is not just on a particular day or in a particular place or age. Rather, the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that the husband that has legal sexual relations with his wife and enjoys her will be rewarded.
- George: How?
- Jamal: Our Prophet (peace be upon him) explained that since one would be sinning if he were to do that in an unlawful manner, so he would be rewarded if he did that through lawful means, if he intends to please God by keeping His rules. In this way, one›s entire life becomes dedicated to Him; prayer and sacrifice, even death and life; as God said: [Say O Muhammad, “Verily, my Salat (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).”] (Al-Anam: 162)
- George: And why are you alive?
- Jamal: I can give you the same answer and still be truthful. I can explain this by saying: we are alive to make full use of the land and life, and to develop it, and I would be truthful. Really, making full use of the land and life and developing it are one of the most important forms of worship. God says: [And to Thamud their brother Salih. He said: “O my people! Worship Allah; you have no other god but him. He brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein, then ask forgiveness of him and turn to him in repentance. Certainly, my Lord is Near (to all by His Knowledge), Responsive.”] (Hud: 61)
- George: Regrettably, we have arrived at our destination. Let’s complete our discussion tomorrow; I’ll wait for you at 10 a.m. My appointment with the last company is at 11 a.m.
- Jamal: Okay.

George climbed into Mustafa's car and greeted him.

- Mustafa: Everything is arranged, and supper will be in a suitable restaurant near one of the hotels. Everyone is waiting for us there.
- George: Great!
- Mustafa: You look tired... Don't worry; we have prepared for you everything that will revitalize you. Regrettably, we Egyptians tend to forget that the Egyptian way of life doesn't suit Europeans.
- George: How?
- Mustafa: I studied at an American university and know your way of life well, and you will see things that will please you tonight.

Mustafa stopped the car at one of the hotels, and he and George went by foot to a side entrance lit with colored lights. Noisy music filled the place. Mustafa put his hand on George's shoulder and moved towards him so George could hear him.

- Mustafa: We have a special private dancing hall which will accommodate us.

They reached the private dancing hall where they saw the four women that had been at the interviews waiting for him.

- Mustafa: I think you remember them from the morning and I brought them so that you could know them better: this is Samira, Manal, 'Aisha and Diana.

Samira stretched out her hand, smiling, so George stretched out his hand, smiled and shook hands with her, and then he shook hands with the rest of them and they all sat down.

- Manal: I›ll jog your memory: I›m Manal ‹Ali and I›m 24 years old – I'm at your service.
- George: Alright... Could you all please introduce yourself as Manal did?
- Samira: I›m Samira Nazmi and I›m 23. I came here to make you happy.
- 'Aisha: I›m 'Aisha Khaled and I›m 25. I›m here for you.
- Diana: I›m Diana Samah and I›m 25.
- George: Welcome to you all. I›m George and I am nearly 40 years old.

Mustafa stood up...

- Mustafa: I›ll be back in a little while... Have a good time, George.
- George: This meeting is a surprise for me, and I didn›t know that we were going to come here.
- One of the four girls: Mustafa told us that he was offering us as a present to you.

- George: I don›t understand?
- One of the four girls: You are here in Egypt alone, and we came to serve you.
- George: Ah... I understand. But to what extent are you willing to serve me and make me happy?
- One of the four girls: Ha! Ha! To an extreme limit.
- One of the four girls: Ask for whatever you want, and you›ll get it from us.

George remained silent staring at the four girls› faces, they were really beautiful and their smiles were tempting and charming...But he felt disgusted by them and from their triviality. He decided to break his silence and talk to them.

- George: I will ask for some things from you, and I'll begin with 'Aisha. .
- 'Aisha: I›m at your beck and call.
- George: I have a question: aren›t you named after the wife of your Prophet?
- 'Aisha: Yes. Why did you ask that question?
- George: Accordingly, there is no doubt that you follow her example in all that you do?
- 'Aisha: Why are you asking such a question? Ask for what you want, and I›ll do it for you.
- George: My request is that you answer my question...
- Samira: Turn to me. I›m Samira, a Christian. What do you mean by these questions that are embarrassing my friend?
- George: Are you defending her?!
- Samira: Yes, she is my friend. It›s my right to divert these embarrassing questions from her.
- George: You are defending her now to make her not embarrassed, but you think she is a disbeliever who will be in hell because Christ did not save her from her sins!
- Samira: Yes, I›m a Christian, but in fact a secularist. I›m interested only in science and what it dictates.
- George: Now that you love science, as you say; did you not complete your secondary as well as university schooling? But what is your main qualification - your beauty!
- Samira: Don›t you want to try this beauty or enjoy it?
- George: Maybe, but I have a question. Doesn›t what you do contradict Christianity?

- Samira: I told you I›m secularist.
- George: Do you mean an atheist?
- Samira: Maybe, because I don›t understand the difference between the two.
- George: But doesn›t tasting your beauty contradict the expected norms and ethics?
- Samira: We know the expected norms here more than you, and ethics are only relative.
- George: How?
- Samira: What is considered as a contradiction of ethics to one person may be the best type of ethics to another.
- George: And there is nothing called ‘one’s principles’.
- Samira: My sole principle is only to do what benefits and interests me.
- George: Most atheists have such principles, interests and pragmatistic views!
- Samira: Now, do you want to know the happiness of tasting beauty?
- George: I have a question now for Manal.
- Manal: I don›t want your questions, what we are doing is shameful, but our needs forced us to do it - and also dirty Mustafa. Come on ‘Aisha, let›s go.
- George: So why do you ladies shame yourselves?

‘Aisha and Manal left, and the silence of the dancing hall made the sound of the loud music fill the place. The silence continued until the waiter arrived...

- Waiter: Mustafa ordered some spirits for you, but he told us to let you choose. What would you like?
- George: Nothing, thanks - I don›t drink.
- Waiter: You don›t drink?! So why did you come here with those beautiful girls? In any case, the dancing ceremony will begin in an hour. Mustafa asked me to tell you that he left you to enjoy yourself. He’ll come at half past eight to see how well you dance. If you change your mind and want to have a drink, just raise your hand and I’ll come.
- Samira: You don›t drink! But aren›t you Christian and European?! I expected that you would be more willing to taste some beauty after drinking something!
- George: Why? Do you have to drink in Christianity?
- Samira: To some extent. Even priests drink as a form of worship and deem it as a sacred form of drinking.
- George: Do you have to drink if you are European?

- Samira: Usually, yes. Europeans are not fanatic Muslims. Mustafa exerted much effort to persuade ‘Aisha and Manal to come, but your questions may have turned them into two fanatical Muslim women.
- George: Oh! Thus, you encourage fanatical Islam!!

Diana was the only one who had remained silent as she had not uttered a word throughout the whole meeting. She was the one whom he admired when he met her in the morning. She was the only one specialized in the field of computers and was professional in it.

- George: What about you? You are different from them!
- Diana: Why am I different from them?
- George: Educated… cultured... silent!
- Diana: But I am just like them; a commodity which is a present that has been offered to you.
- George: Why did you agree to be a commodity?
- Diana: To escape from myself.
- George: How?
- Diana: I’m tired and sick of life; therefore my uncle asked Mustafa to help me get over my psychological problems by being busy with amusement and entertainment.
- George: And you, what is your opinion?
- Diana: If I knew that life had some meaning, I would have an opinion! But I›m like a straw blowing in the wind: life pushes me here and there, making it have no meaning. Maybe, my uncle›s plan with Mustafa is the best way for me!
- George: Could the best way be escaping from your life, wasting your time, and turning into a commodity?
- Diana: Maybe, you don’t know the meaning of being lost and having no goal, as if you did you wouldn’t say what you just said. Suicide is easier for me than what I am now suffering.
- George: But you do know why you are alive in your religion, and why you are created?
- Diana: No, actually, I don›t know - and I would be grateful if you told me.
- George: My Muslim friend told me today that you were created to worship God, and gave me a fantastic philosophical meaning of worship.
- Diana: But I›m an orthodox Christian, not a Muslim.

- Samira: The two Muslims have left so you can relax and enjoy yourself more as the show is just about to start.
- George: Now that you two are Christians like me, I agree to enjoy this night here, but on the condition that Diana persuades me.
- Diana: Persuade you about what?
- George: Persuade me that happiness means to enjoy your fascinating beauty, drink wine and forget the world, and also escape from the misery of life to the bliss of forgetting.
- Diana: Samira is more able to convince you than me.
- George: My condition is that you convince me, Diana.
- Diana: Samira is one of the most beautiful Egyptian girls. She is a skillful dancer who can make you forget the whole world, especially if you drink some alcohol with her. Have you been persuaded?!
- George: I am beginning to be convinced. But why do you mention Samira? What if I wanted you to drink first and dance with me first?
- Diana: Although I haven›t drunk in my life before, I agree, as I feel very unhappy right now and I would like to get away from the questions which have destroyed my life.
- George: What questions?
- Diana: I have been thinking about these questions for a long time; about the reason we are alive, the creation and the meaning of life, and similar questions.
- George: Do you believe that your drinking or dancing, or even practicing sex, can make you forget your questions?
- Diana: Temporarily at least, I›m ready for what you want. Don›t speak too long and ask so many tiring questions.
- George: These questions have made me tired like you, but I am convinced that trying to escape from them is a stupid approach, and that it is better to face them and answer them.
- Diana: And so do I! But I am tired.
- George: Your politeness, culture and mind are beautiful, so don›t spoil all that beauty by abusing the beauty of your body.
- Diana: I›m leaving now, thanks for all the pieces of advice, and all the insults you offered me… Then she stood up and left...
- Samira: So it›s just you and me, and I am ready. Do you want to dance to enjoy

ourselves here, or in your hotel?

- George: Where is Mustafa?
- Samira: Mustafa left us so we would be able to enjoy ourselves more, let›s go.
- George: Let’s go...

George stood up with Samira and she turned to the dance floor, while George turned and went towards the door to leave. When he was about to leave, he saw Mustafa standing holding a girl. George took a quick glance at him, and then turned away to go outside...

- Mustafa: George, wait... What›s the matter with you, my friend?
- George: Nothing... I›m tired and I want to rest in the hotel.
- Mustafa: Come with me, I’ll give you a lift.
- George: Alright, but quickly please.
- Mustafa: What›s your opinion about the girls?!
- George: Very beautiful.
- Mustafa: I left you so you could relax with them and have a good time
- George: I have enjoyed them enough.
- Mustafa: Who did you admire the most?
- George: All of them. By the way, are you a Muslim?
- Mustafa: Yes, my name is named after the Messenger.
- George: You are a bad example of a Muslim!
- Mustafa: Excuse me?! What are you saying?
- George: Nothing, you are a Muslim like my friend Jamal, but you are totally different from him.
- Mustafa: I said to you he is a fanatic and an extremist, and I have learned abroad and know the world more than him.
- George: I wish you would drive faster; I›m tired and want to reach the hotel quickly.
- Mustafa: When will our appointment be tomorrow?
- George: We don›t have an appointment tomorrow. I am busy, but I will contact you.

George reached the hotel but he couldn’t stop hitting his palms together in amazement and bewilderment. His day was very long, a day filled with surprises and contradictions... He felt that his body was heavy, so he flung himself onto his bed upon his arrival at his room and started to feel overcome with wor-

ries. His questions returned to him violently. He remembered the educated and cultured Diana whose doubt had overwhelmed her, so she try to escape by being busy with amusement and enjoyment. He remembered the question which he had sent to his friends, and Jamal had asked him the same question: «What is stopping you from adopting Islam?»

George was immersed in his thoughts and was not aware of anything until he woke up at half past eight in the morning. When he woke up from his sleep he noticed that he was still in his work clothes, and in fact he was in a deplorable state.

Discussions with the soul

17

Discussions with the soul

Discussions with the soul

(1)

George got out of his bed with great difficulty. He felt lazy and preferred to stay the whole day in the room and not meet with anyone, but he had to deal with Kach and the job he had given him. He was determined to outwit Kach and to perform well in his difficult task, so he had to forget his personal affairs and the fear, hesitation and boredom that might overcome him, and not let them affect his work and future negatively.

He had an appointment with Jamal that day at ten o›clock, so he still had enough time to have his breakfast and check his e-mail. He didn›t have the desire to leave the room, so he called the restaurant and asked them to bring his breakfast buffet up to him. Then he went to the bathroom to take a quick shower while waiting for the food.

A few minutes later the waiter knocked at the door and entered with the food. He put the dishes on the table and left. George began eating his breakfast while he was checking his incoming messages and found a message from Katrina:

"My beloved George,

Though you have only be gone for a little while, I don't know why, but I feel that I miss you very much and need you a lot, and that I can't wait for the month to be over for you to return. I have some problems and am confused and in dire need of your wisdom and support. I can give you an indication of my quandry by telling you that I, the devout Catholic, have cried while listening to some translations of the holy book of the Muslims which they call the Qur'an. I am in severe turmoil right now and need you,

Yours,

Katrina"

Then he replied:

“My beloved Katrina,

I believe I shall return soon, since yesterday’s appointment was very bad and showed me a negative example of Muslims. I do not know whether the problem lies in the Muslims or in their religion? One thing I know for sure is that I hate Mustafa, with whom I had an appointment yesterday. I’ll try to come back in a few days so pray for me; I do not want to fail in the assignment with Kach,

Yours,

George”

He also found a message from Janolka:

“Dear George,

I have received your message, and I was happy that my opinion concerning the theft of Muslims was true - please don’t ever jump to conclusions so quickly again. As for the status of women, I have no problem with it, but my principal concern is about freedom in Islam! So, if you have any view or opinion that could be useful, please do share it with me,

Janolka”

Then he replied:

“Dear Janolka,

You may be surprised that I have changed my mind in such a short period of time! Yes, there is no injustice to women in Islam, but rather, Islam came with what is suitable for her stature and nature, even though we’re not used to that in our European societies as it is an entirely different system. I have discussed the matter in depth and have become certain of it, but I have not read or discussed the issue of freedom. So, if you have something about it, please send it to me, and I’ll send it to the entire group as well. I’ll try to discuss the issue of freedom as well and also read about it,

George”

While he was checking his mail, the phone in the hotel room rang; it was the receptionist telling him that he had a visitor waiting for him in the lobby. He looked at his watch and found that it was only half past nine. Was it possible that Jamal had come half an hour ahead of schedule?

- George: Excuse me, but could you tell me who is waiting for me?

- The receptionist: Yes, a young lady.
- George: Who is she?
- The receptionist: She told me that you know her, but she didn't tell me her name.
- George: Okay, I'm on my way downstairs to meet her.

George went down to the parlor to find Diana waiting for him. She was dressed simply; her hair was gathered back and she wasn't wearing any make-up. There was a big difference between the way she looked the day before and now; she seemed more splendorous and the expression on her face was softer. Her fair eyes had a look that revealed her intelligence and astuteness.

He welcomed her and invited her to sit in the visitor's lounge.

- George: What would you like to drink?
- Diana: Nothing. I won't keep you for long. I just wanted to discuss something with you.

George signaled for the waiter to bring them two glasses of juice. Then he turned to Diana wondering why she had come. He saw that she had tears in her eyes that she was trying to hide.

- George: Go ahead, Diana.
- Diana: I'm the one yesterday who wanted to run away from the questions that keep destroying and killing me from inside! I'm the one who you insulted yesterday! I'm the fugitive orthodox! I'm the 'educated silent one' as you said. And I'm the one who is tired!
- George: Yes, I remember you well. But what do you want from me?
- Diana: Am I not pretty?!
- George: Yes, you are very beautiful. It is a glamorous oriental beauty! But, have you come to me to tell you that?!
- Diana: Then why did you insult me yesterday?
- George: I didn't. I was just asking you questions and having a discussion with you.
- Diana: You mentioned that the questions tire you, just like me, and that running away will not resolve the problem! Can you give me the answers to these debilitating questions, then?
- George: Did you come to ask me that?

- Diana: Yes!
- George: What if I told you that I don't have the answers yet, and that I was, at one time, about to commit suicide because of these questions?!
- Diana: If what you said is true, then it indicates that you are intelligent.
- George: Finding no answer indicates intelligence!?
- Diana: I mean not running away is evidence of intelligence.
- George: Then why do you run away?
- Diana: We are human beings and go through moments of weakness.
- George: But aren't there real answers to these questions?
- Diana: Undoubtedly there are.
- George: How I wish I could find them.
- Diana: As for me, I know the answers, but I don't have the courage to act on them.
- George: You know them?!
- Diana: Yes, but one can't establish one's identity and become happy in one's life, or change one's situation, unless they are brave.
- George: You're talking in riddles; I don't understand what you are saying!
- Diana: Sometimes the poor one remains poor because he is afraid of losing his capital if he starts trading. Sometimes the unmarried one remains single because he is afraid to get married. Sometimes the ignorant one remains ignorant because he is afraid to learn.
- George: That is true and very clear, but I don't understand what you are talking about!
- Diana: I know a very convenient answer to these questions, but I may be killed or jailed if I act on them, so I stay as I am.
- George: I'm not going to be weak-hearted! Tell me what they are?
- Diana: Are you sure you are brave enough?
- George: Perhaps. Please, tell me the answers in simple terms.
- Diana: I used to say the same as you are saying now, but in the end I became weak-hearted and started to think of how I could escape.
- George: Let me test my courage and see if I can be convinced by what you say. Where can I find the answers to my questions?

- Diana: I came to find out from you how to answer the questions, not to inform you how to answer the questions!
- George: But I've turned into a student. Go ahead and tell me.
- Diana: Maybe what I'm going to tell you might upset you, however I studied and searched for a long time but I didn't find anything else but this. So let me ask you: what is stopping you from becoming a Muslim?

George turned his eyes to the sky, and then he gave a slight smile to Diana and began to recall the situations he had experienced since the time he decided to travel on the path to happiness; Katrina, Urmila, Levvi, Habib, Janolka, Mutee' Al- Rahman, Kareemul-Allah, Adam, Sheikh Bassem and Jamal. He had covered a long distance and gone through several experiences. He had read, discussed and contemplated. Could it be that the end of this arduous journey is Islam? Is Islam the path to happiness?

Isn't he the one who had often said: "If I find the way, I'll directly proceed to it"? He thought to himself: "Is it true what Adam said about needing courage? And is the courage which he thinks he has just empty words? "

- Diana: Sorry, it seems that I've disturbed you. I wish I could have had another answer. All I hope is that your silence is not out of fear and weak-heartedness, like me!
- George: Excuse me. I was in deep though!
- Diana: About what?
- George: About your question.
- Diana: I know your answer in advance; you're afraid.
- George: Afraid of what?
- Diana: Afraid of those who are around you - afraid of yourself.
- George: No, I'm not. But can you tell me first: why do you harbor all this fear of Islam?
- Diana: I'm not afraid of Islam!
- George: So what are you afraid of?
- Diana: I'm afraid of my family. My father died and I moved with my mother to live in my uncle's house. And I know that if I converted to Islam it would drive him crazy, and he would probably kill me!

- George: Why?
- Diana: My parents believe that Muslims have deceived us.
- George: That may be true!
- Diana: My uncle is keen on making me meet and sit with deviant Muslims, even more than sitting with Christians. I had discussions with many Christians who said that I made them weak in their faith, therefore my uncle is keen to make me meet Muslims who have deviated from their religion because they are worse than Christians.
- George: Such as Mustafa?
- Diana: Yes! How I hate him.
- George: But, is he not an example of a Muslim?
- Diana: He is a good example of a corrupt deviant one, whether you call that secularism, liberalism or devilishness. But, answer me: what is stopping you from embracing Islam?
- George: Sorry, I first just want to complete what we were talking about. Why would your uncle kill you if you converted to Islam?
- Diana: To prevent others from apostating from Christianity!
- George: This is incompatible with the most basic rights of religious freedom!
- Diana: What freedom?! I'm a Christian like you. Do you have the freedom not to believe in the mysteries of the church which the mind rejects?! Do you have the freedom to believe that the Christ was not a god, as is written in some versions of the scriptures?!
- George: We'll have to stop here because I have an appointment and my friend has been waiting patiently for a while now, but I'd like to complete our discussion later! I want to introduce my Muslim friend to you, if you don't mind.
- Diana: I think that you're evading the answer of the question as you are scared and lack courage like me, but it's up to you. I will be pleased to meet him.

George went to Jamal and apologized for the delay. He told him the news of Diana, and they returned together to her.

- George: This is Diana, who wants to be a Muslim.
- Jamal: Hello Diana! I am Jamal from Alexandria, and we are so happy to welcome you to Islam.

- Diana: I'm also from Alexandria, but I'm an Orthodox Christian, and I didn't tell George that I wanted to become Muslim. I told him that the solution to many of our troubling questions lies in Islam.
- Jamal: Good. This means that you want to embrace Islam, because no one likes anxiety and depression, or not to find answers to their questions.
- Diana: True, and for this reason I was asking George why he hadn't embraced Islam yet.
- George: And I didn't answer her…. But I was surprised by the harshness of the Egyptians, as Diana said that if she converted to Islam she would be jailed or killed!

Diana sighed bitterly and said:

- Diana: Please don't accuse the Egyptians! The people in Europe and America are far harsher than us. Have you forgotten what you did in Iraq, in Abu Gharaib? Their cruelty, violence and sadism is in the darkest and worst forms, especially against the women who are living in the West. Is it possible that you are denying that the woman is exposed to beatings six times more often than the men? Do you deny that 33% of American women are subjected to beatings? Do you deny that in Britain 77% of the husbands beat their wives without there being any reason for that?!
- George: I can see that you have become angry and uncomfortable with our conversation.
- Diana: No, but I'm an Egyptian who is defending my country against your accusations.
- George: Patriotism is lovely, it's very lovely, but loving principles is better. And although I believe that we are sadistic and cruel in the West, I'm amazed that there are the same cruel traits here. But we are better than you with regards to religious freedom; you can be Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Buddhist there without any problem.

Jamal laughed and said:

- Ha ha ha! This is why the face veil (Niqaab) has been banned in France! Is this why the call to prayer and the construction of the mosques have been disallowed in Switzerland?! What freedom are you exactly talking about?
- George: True, Jamal. But we don't kill or imprison anyone if he wants to embrace

Islam.

- Jamal: And neither do we.
- George: You're correct. I think that there is some Christian intolerance in our country, but didn't Islam also spread by the sword and with force?
- Jamal: Who was the commander of the army through which Indonesia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania or other countries converted to Islam? There was no such army as most Muslim countries converted to Islam just by being called to it, without 'the sword', and history proves it. They also didn't force anyone to convert to Islam. Excuse me, but haven't the Christians in these countries been under Muslim rule for nearly 1,400 years? Who forced them to become Muslims? Weren't the Indians under the rule of Islam for more than 1,000 years? Who forced them to embrace Islam? Did they force the Christians in Andalusia, or what is now called Spain, to embrace Islam, or are the Christians the ones who forced the Muslims to become Christians and killed them in the inquisition after that?!

George felt that the tone of the debate was changing and that it had become out of control, so he wanted to finish it and not delay his schedule:

- George: We're very late, and I 'm happy I introduced you to each other. Diana, this is my card, and I want your phone number, please.
- Diana: Here is my business card, and this is for you, Jamal.
- George: I'll call you - if you don't mind - to complete our discussion, maybe later or tomorrow.
- Diana: It's important not to let my uncle know so that I don't become like Wafaa Constantine, Christine Masry, Merna Adel or others … but remember, you haven't answered my question yet!
- George: I'll be in touch with you today or tomorrow, and I'll answer you even though the question is difficult! We really have to be on our way now.

(2)

When George and Jamal were driving in the car, George turned to Jamal and asked him, in a tone of surprise:

- Who were those people that Diana mentioned earlier?
- Jamal: You mean Wafaa Constantine, Christine and Merna, and others? They were Christians who became Muslim and were then kidnapped and tortured, and some of them were killed! So she is scared of becoming one of them.
- George: Cruelty and violence! The important thing now is that I want to finish my work in Cairo tomorrow to return to Britain for a few days and then return again to Cairo, due to some personal issues my wife's going through right now, and I'd like to be by her side.
- Jamal: Well, today's appointment is with the last company. Then make your decisions, even if they are just preliminary, about what arrangements you want to make.
- George: Yes, perhaps, but I'd like to develop some way of following-up and continuing the work after I travel.
- Jamal: After the interview with the last company you may find the right one for the job. We've arrived. What time do you want to go back to the hotel?
- George: We can go to the company together and decide after that.

They entered the building of the company and asked the secretary to see the director. She called him to tell him that George had arrived for the appointment.

- The secretary: Go in, please! Dr. Khalid is waiting for you.

Dr. Khalid welcomed them and asked them to enter the conference room.

- George: Based on the correspondence between us, I expect that there are a number of specialist individuals lined up for me to interview today?
- Dr. Khalid: Yes, there are four people today, and we can meet others tomorrow if you wish, as I've arranged all the technicians to come on one day and the specialists who are professionals in the management of knowledge and technology to come on another day.
- George: Fantastic! What about the specialists in the management of knowledge

or technology?

- Dr. Khalid: As I mentioned to you, there are four and you will meet them today. I think they can interview the technicians on behalf of you if you are happy with them. The applicants are generally technicians and also programmers, but they have studied and have experience in the management of technical and programming procedures.
- George: When shall I meet them?
- Dr. Khalid: After you finish your cup of tea you can meet them, individually or collectively, if you like.
- George: I'd like to interview the four together, please.
- Dr. Khalid: As you like. I'll tell them to prepare themselves until you finish your tea. Here, these are their biographies as it is good to get to know them before the interview. Now excuse me for a few minutes.

George browsed the CVs quickly, and he was highly impressed by them, but he did not want to rush with his decision until he had met them. He summed up their information on a small piece of paper:

Muhammad Ali - Muslim - 38 years old – he has managed e-government projects in Egypt, but they were not completed.

Amir Isaac - 43 – Christian - managed IT projects for the United Nations with the Egyptian government and the Egyptian Information Center.

Salwa Hassan - 39 – Muslim - managed IT projects for a company that works with smart devices.

Mazin Kamal - 39 - Muslim - managed two companies for programming and web design.

- Once he finished writing the notes, Dr. Khalid entered...
- Dr. Khalid: If you're finished I'll invite them to the conference room.
- George: I'm ready.
- Jamal: Well, George, I'm going now. When do you want me to come back?
- George: Thanks, Jamal. I don't think I will take long, not more than an hour. I'll be waiting for you as there's somewhere I want to go with you.
- Jamal: Alright, bye for now!

Dr. Khalid asked the potential candidates to go to the conference room,

where George was sitting waiting for them. ..

- Dr. Khalid: I'll be quick: Concerning Mr. George, I have explained to you what he wants, and he has reviewed all your CVs, and to save time the interview will be done collectively. George, if you please.
- George: Hello and welcome; I must say that I'm very impressed by all your CVs, without exception. I've read over them and they are with me, but can everyone please tell me individually what he or she can offer our company, and why he or she applied for the position.

George listened to them and debated with them until he had a good opinion of all of them. He decided to choose three of them in particular; (Amir, Salwa, Mazen), since Muhammad wasn't very suitable for the work. He asked them to nominate one of them as their director, and they unanimously agreed that Amir was the most experienced one.

- George: Don't you have a problem that your director is a Christian?
- Amir: What's the problem? You're a Christian, too?
- Mazen: Amir has been a friend of mine since high school days, and I'll say it in front of him, "He deserves to be the manager more than me." I wish he would accept Islam, but if he doesn't, he'll still be my friend.
- Amir: We don't have the same problems you have concerning dealing with Muslims, and I believe that Mazen has more managerial skills than me.
- George: I have an appointment soon. I want you to continue the meeting and establish the outline of an integrated plan to ascertain the labor and management requirements for the first year, and we shall meet together tomorrow morning to develop, review and approve the preliminary plans, and to start the work. Besides, I bring you good news: I have met an excellent group of distinguished technical staff in the International Employment Agency.
- Amir: Which is managed by Dr. Gerges?
- George: Yes, Amir. Do you know him?
- Amir: Dr. Gerges is a friend of mine and Mazen. He has a crew of special workers.
- George: I also have a very distinctive programmer I met in another office whose name is Diana Sameh.

- Amir: Ha ha ha! Diana Sameh, the programmer?
- George: Do you know her?
- Amir: Yes, she's my sister's daughter.
- George: Are you her uncle?
- Amir: Yes!
- George: It's not possible!
- Amir: What's not possible?!
- George: I must meet with you tonight; would you accept an invitation for dinner at seven?
- Amir: All of us?
- George: No sorry, I just want to meet with you for a private matter that has nothing to do with work.
- Amir: Okay! Where?
- George: At the hotel where I'm staying. Here is the address.

(3)

- George: Would you take me somewhere, and I hope that you won't object?
- Jamal: Yes, okay, but where?
- George: I want to get to know and meet the poor; the ordinary and common folk of the country.
- Jamal: That is indeed a very strange request and I won't object, but why?
- George: I want to hear their perspectives on certain things, and get to know how they perceive life.
- Jamal: Well, that's a good enough reason for me!
- George: By the way, I met Diana's uncle who would apparently kill her if she converted to Islam, and that gave me an idea.
- Jamal: Where did you meet him?
- George: Actually, he's the one whom I nominated to be the director of the company!
- Jamal: Most definitely someone like that is not suitable for that position. Why such intolerance, George?

- George: I didn't know that he was her uncle until after I had decided and agreed with him that he would be the director.
- Jamal: This is a flaw, and since he lacks morals, you might change your mind.
- George: True, this might be the case, but I'm going to test something out which you'll witness this evening as you're invited to dinner at the hotel with me.
- Jamal: What do you mean?
- George: You'll see in the evening.
- Jamal: Well, here we are in a poor area of the city.
- George: I'd like to visit someone at his home.
- Jamal: Visit someone at his home! Okay, fine. I know someone who he lives on the other side of the street. Let me call him to make sure that he's there and that it's okay for us to come.
- George: Okay, and I'll call Diana.

George called Diana and they agreed to meet at seven o'clock at the hotel, and Jamal called Uncle Sa'eed to tell him that he and George were on their way to visit him.

- Jamal: He said he's free. We should buy lunch and take it with us.
- George: Why?
- Jamal: Because it's not proper to go at lunch time without Uncle Sa'eed giving us some food, but I know that he's not able to give us a meal, so I don't want to embarrass him.
- George: Okay, good! Then let's buy a very impressive lunch with sweets and all things which are suitable.

They arrived at Uncle Sa'eed's house. It was a very old house in a narrow and unclean street. Jamal knocked at the door and Uncle Sa'eed opened it. They were welcomed warmly with the Islamic greeting and received with a friendly smile. They entered with the parcels of lunch, fruit and sweets, and he showed them to an old but neat room which was furnished with a worn-out floor sofa. There was a dining table in the middle of the room which was set for lunch. It had some pieces of bread, vegetables and a dish of rice on it.

- Sa'eed: Come in, please, and take a seat!
- Jamal: Thank you. Here, please, help yourself; we've brought some lunch with

us.

- Sa’eed: I’m grateful, but there was no need since I had prepared some lunch for you. Just a minute, I’ll take it inside to put it out for us.

When Uncle Sa’eed went inside, George asked Jamal to tell him exactly what they had said, and asked him to translate what Uncle Sa’eed said as soon as he said anything, and not to leave a single word without translating it. A few minutes later Uncle Sa’eed returned with a large tray on which the lunch dishes brought by George and Jamal were laid.

- Sa’eed: Please, help yourself. We’re honored to have you here in our home.
- George: Jamal, ask him what he wishes for from this world.
- Sa’eed: The protection of God and health, my son.
- George: Is he happy in his life?
- Sa’eed: Son, the blessings Allah has given me are great; I have a house and children, and every day I find a means of living. What more could I want than that?
- George: Doesn’t he wish for wealth and riches?
- Sa’eed: May our Lord bestow upon us wealth and increase it, but I do not ask for just money, may He increase our wealth, health and make us have peace of mind.
- George: Ask him why he wants to have peace of mind, and what he means by that?
- Sa’eed: Jamal, ask your friend how he can live like that. Whosoever does not understand peace of mind, his life must be bitter.
- George: If you don’t mind, please rephrase my question as follows: ‘How and when do you feel you have peace of mind?’
- Sa’eed: I find peace of mind when I drink tea with my children in the afternoon, when I lay on my side on the bed at night and I have not disobeyed my Lord, and I have fulfilled the rights that are obligatory on me, and haven’t hurt anyone. Ask him, son: ‘Doesn’t he feel peace of mind after he prays?’

When Jamal translated the words to George, he kept silent for a long period of time, looking down all the time.

- Sa’eed: I’m sorry, I’m afraid I spoke too much and you’re my guests, so it is your right to be honored.
- George: He doesn’t have to apologize, I’m the one who should apologize for not

answering his question, and I hope I may be excused for not answering him. I'd like to ask one last question, ask him, "What does he live for?'

- Sa'eed: You ask such strange questions! Is there anyone who doesn't know what he lives for?! Son, our Lord created us to worship Him. He is the One Who gives us provision, and all bounties and acts of generosity are in His hand. But I don't understand, why did you give me the honor of your visit?
- George: Tell him that we wanted to benefit from him and to get to know him.
- Sa'eed: May God bless you.

George noticed that Uncle Sa'eed was eating more of the food that he had laid on the table than the higher quality food that they had brought.

- George: Jamal, ask him why he doesn't eat from the food we brought?
- Sa'eed: To leave it for you; you are my guests, even though it is you who brought it! Besides, I really find in my humble food the same pleasure you find in your food. As long as a person is happy and well, all types of food will be delicious and all life will be happy, praise be to God!

They finished their lunch. Then they said farewell to Uncle Sa'eed, thanked him for his hospitality and left.

- George: It seems I've made you tired, but I want to visit a church or a humble Christian citizen.
- Jamal: Then let's go down the street a little as Uncle Sa'eed's neighbor is a Christian. Do you want me to ask him to ask his neighbor if we can visit him?
- George: Yes, please.

Jamal called Uncle Sa'eed and asked him to arrange the visit. After only a few minutes, Uncle Sa'eed came out with a smile on his face.

- Sa'eed: Shall we go?!
- Jamal: Where?
- Sa'eed: To my neighbor's flat. I've called him and told him that you're at his door and he welcomes you with open arms.

Uncle Sa'eed knocked at the door. An old woman wearing a scarf on her head which covered her hair and let nothing appear to them except her face, opened the door.

- The old woman: Come in, please. Saber is washing his face. I've woken him up and he'll be with you shortly.

- Sa'eed: Wait a minute; I'll just go to my house to get something quickly.
- George: Jamal, are you sure this is a Christian house?
- Jamal: Yes, according to what they have told us.
- George: Then why does the woman cover her hair?
- Jamal: Even though I know the answer, I'd prefer if you hear it from them.

Uncle Sa'eed returned with coffee and some food and put them before George and Jamal.

- Sa'eed: I told my neighbor not to prepare anything as I had everything ready. Also we surprised him with the visit, and his guests are my guests.
- Saber: Thank you for the food and coffee, and for bringing the guests.
- George: Jamal, ask them how long they've been neighbors?
- Saber: Sa'eed has been my friend since I was 12 years old, when my father and his were neighbors.
- George: But you don't follow the same religion!
- Saber: True, but we're neighbors and friends. Every day Sa'eed advises me about Islam and he wants me to embrace it.
- George: Ask him about his view of Islam and Christianity, and the relationship between them.
- Saber: Son, Jesus and Muhammad are all messengers of God, and my father and I are Christians, and Sa'eed and his father are Muslims, and the relationship between us has been good for a long time.
- George: Ask him why he didn't convert to Islam since he believes that Muhammad is a Messenger of God?
- Saber: Ha ha ha! Sa'eed also believes that Jesus is the messenger of God, so why didn't he convert to Christianity then?!
- George: Because the Muslim believes that Jesus is the Messenger of God, but the Christians don't believe that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
- Saber: The same words of Sa'eed! Do you want the truth, my son? I'm afraid to leave what my father and my grandfather believed in, otherwise I'm pretty convinced by what Sa'eed says, and he is dearer to me than my cousins, but I have a question for you: are you Christian or Muslim?

- George: Sorry, but I want to keep the answer to that question to myself, for the sake of time and because I have another question: why does your wife wear a scarf like the Muslims?
- Saber: My wife dresses just like all Egyptian women, Christians and Muslims!
- George: Christian women in Europe don’t cover their heads.
- Saber: I know that in Europe women used to cover their heads and sometimes even their faces, and this habit didn’t change until only recently. If you want to check this fact, then look at pictures of your grandmothers or their mothers! They dress the same way our women do, but young girls and especially Christians love imitating you, though I wish they would only imitate your good points.
- George: Why is this? And why especially Christians?
- Saber: Because the religion for Muslims is like a dye that changes all of the person’s life, and sins and faults are eliminated only by sincere repentance. While as for Christians, the religion only alters one’s life when he is in the church. And for us, it is enough that Jesus has redeemed us from all our sins, so the problem of sinning is solved.
- George: Express my gratitude to them for entertaining us! We must go now so as not to be late for our dinner reservation at the hotel.

They said farewell to Uncle Sa’eed and Uncle Saber, and walked to the car.

- Jamal: Have you achieved what you wanted?
- George: Yes. And my mind is on the brink of exploding. I feel like there is a volcano exploding inside of me, and had it not been for the appointment with Diana and her uncle, I would have tried to stay longer with these simple people. They express a deep and simple view of life. Jamal, excuse me, I don’t feel like talking much.
- Jamal: Okay.

George’s head was nearly blowing up due to the pressure of only one question: “What stands between you and the path to happiness?” He kept thinking, “Are you a coward? Has the way not become clear to you yet?! Or do you know what you don’t want and don’t know what you want!?” He wished that the questions would not be so difficult on his mind which had become troubled due to the quantity and quality of information that had been offered to it.

(4)

- George: We have almost arrived at the hotel. I've invited Diana and her uncle to dinner too.
- Jamal: And what do you plan to do?
- George: I want to encourage the woman to embrace Islam and solve the problem with her uncle.
- Jamal: Fabulous! You've become an advocate of Islam, but when will you yourself become a Muslim?
- George: As I said to Uncle Saber, I'm keeping the answer to that question to myself, as my head is almost bursting due the greatness of the question, or maybe I just want to run away from it - I don't know!
- Jamal: How will you call her to Islam, O caller?!
- George: Thanks for your mockery! She wants to embrace Islam, but she is afraid of her uncle, and so I plan on removing this fear.
- Jamal: How?
- George: You'll see, as we've arrived.
- Jamal: The important thing is not to cause any problem for Diana with her uncle.
- George: We've arrived on time. I'll go upstairs quickly to put down my bag and then come to you in the restaurant.

Jamal entered the restaurant and found Diana and her uncle sitting together at the same table, waiting for George, so he sat down with them.

- Jamal: George went upstairs to put his bag down and will be with us soon.
- Amir: I don't know what he wants. Once he learned that I'm Diana's uncle, he insisted on inviting me to dine with him. Do you know what he wants?
- Jamal: Diana probably knows..!
- Diana: I don't know anything! He told me in the morning that he would contact me to answer my question: 'Why hasn't he become a Muslim?' I was surprised that he invited me to dinner!

George arrived at the hotel restaurant. Diana saw him and signaled to him from afar, so he went towards the table where they were sitting.

- George: Let me introduce you to each other. This is Amir, the regional director of our company in Egypt, and this is Diana, the distinguished programmer. This is my Muslim friend, who is not a programmer, but his specialty is the father of programming; I mean mathematics.

- Diana: My uncle is the director of your company?!
- George: He is efficient enough to be the director of the company, and this is according to the testimony of all his colleagues, even though they are Muslims.
- Amir: Thank you for thinking well of me.
- George: But I'm still surprised that his fellows are Muslims and yet they are the ones who nominated him to be the director!

Diana smiled and said:

- Diana: What's so strange about that?!
- George: Some Christians prevent people from embracing Islam.

Amir said with astonishment:

- Amir: Because they don't understand Islam very well!
- George: Amir, do you mean that you don't see anything wrong with them embracing Islam?!
- Amir: I'll tell you what I'm convinced of, although you may not want to hear it, but I don't see anything wrong if a Christian embraces Islam. In fact there is something you may not know about me, which is that three weeks ago I started visiting one of the centers that explains Islam to the people. And who knows, maybe I'll become a Muslim soon?!
- George: Your uncle might embrace Islam, so what is holding you back from doing the same?
- Diana: Ha ha ha! Now I understand. Ha, ha, ha!
- George: What do you understand? What's wrong with you?
- Diana: Uncle Amir is not the uncle whom I told you about.
- George: How come? So you mean he is the brother of your uncle that you told me about.
- Diana: No, and you'll probably be surprised by what I am going to say; but my grandfather married more than one wife.
- George: He is Christian and was married to more than one wife?! I don't know any Christian who advocates polygamy!
- Diana: Who said that? We've had those who professed that the Bible does not prohibit polygamy, not even that, but also Pope Mark V was imprisoned because he rejected polygamy while the people wanted it, and they were supported by some bishops at the time. So there is polygamy, whether this was because of the influence of the Muslims, as their enemies say, or because the New Testament

does not prohibit it as some of the supporters of polygamy from among the bishops say, or because polygamy is better than having mistresses. In any case, my grandfather's wife died and he remarried. So Amir is my uncle, but he is not the full brother of my uncle, Marcos, whom I told you about. He is his half-brother; the son of his father.

- George: Amazing! People want polygamy?!
- Amir: Now I understand why you invited me. You thought I was the one who was preventing Diana from embracing Islam.
- George: Yes!

Diana pursed her lips and said firmly:

- Diana: But I understood that the invitation was to tell me why you hadn't converted to Islam.

Jamal, with wonderment…

- Jamel: Let me intervene, and this is very true by the way. If you are so eager for Diana to embrace Islam, then why don't you convert to Islam yourself?
- Diana: I have asked him this question, but he keeps evading the answer. So I thought the invitation was to tell me the answer to that question. Could you answer the question now?
- George: I should answer it, but if you'll allow me some time, I'd be grateful to you.

Amir smiled while he said...

- Amir: Then don't answer; we want the answer, but when it is said without you feeling embarrassed.

Diana looked up and said:

- Diana: I know the answer and I'll keep it to myself as long as you don't want to say it.
- George: Thank you all, but I don't think anyone knows what's inside me!
- Diana: You're a human being, and you want happiness. My Uncle Amir and I are the same, and what has prevented us is the same that is preventing you, whether we're courageous and declare the reason, or are cowards and hide it even from our own selves. For example, I lie to myself and use the circumstances as an excuse when I say that the reason is because of my uncle, Marcos! If I had the courage and was truly free, I would have made the decision.
- George: You are confusing me! Then what is preventing you?

Diana wiped her hand on her hair and said:

- Diana: What is really stopping me is the same thing that is preventing you and Uncle Amir, and we've allowed you not to tell us so as not to make your contradictions clear in front of yourself, so why don't you also allow us not to tell you. Every person has contradictions, aspirations and desires inside himself, and being truthful with oneself is often difficult, especially if it's to do with why he is actually alive, and the meaning of his existence and his life. That's why people flee from this difficulty with wine and trivial merrymaking, as I did, acting like a weak coward!

Amir was apparently amazed and touched by Diana's words. He looked down and said,

- Amir: I understand very well what you are saying. A person has to live happily and discover himself in order to recognize his Lord and enjoy his life. But it's still a decision that has to be taken based on one's own free choice and it also needs a lot of courage, and you, Diana, are the bravest one among us. That's why you said what you did.

Jamal kept turning his face from one guest to the other. He did not thoroughly comprehend what was being said...

- Jamal: I don't understand anything! What courage are you talking about?!

Despite her deep soft voice, Diana said firmly:

- Diana: The courage to get rid of the diseases of the soul and to overcome life's circumstances and its desires, suspicions and compulsions. The freedom to make a decision that is different from anything you're used to, and to overcome all the suspicions you have and also overcome any cunning plot that may be directed against you… and also the courage to believe what your tongue itself keeps denying although your heart knows it very well.
- Jamal: I'm still trying to understand!
- Amir: Maybe it is difficult for you to understand because you were born a Muslim. But as for me, I understand what Diana means and I think George understands it as well.

Diana's eyes filled with tears as she said:

- Diana: Except if he doesn't want to understand, or if he doesn't want to show that he understands. Many people flee from themselves to give themselves the delusion that they feel happy.

All of the stages of his exploratory journey flashed through George's mind in front of him, like a film on fast forward. He remembered all the verses he had read from the Qur'an, all the situations he had gone through and all the contradictions he had tried to find answers to. George's confused looks showed the volcano that was moving inside of him, which he was trying by all means to hide, but couldn't, so he decided to limit his words.

- George: Yes, I understand.
- Jamal: I understand that you're talking about mysteries, and the good that I wish is that you all accept Islam to attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter, and to gain all the best of every religion. Allah has told the truth when He said: [This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion] (Al-Mai-idah:3), the religion, our guide, has been completed and the favor of God on us has been fulfilled with this religion of Islam.
- George: Now I think I finally understand very well what I have been looking for since a long time ago.
- Jamal: What is it that you were looking for?
- George: I was searching for myself and for a meaning to my life and my existence. I eventually understand that I need to look for the light of true monotheism and to have a beautiful view of life; to look for the pleasures of the spirit, mind and the soul.

Diana wiped her tears and said,

- Diana: This is exactly what I'm looking for!
- George: At last I've found that the fine line that regulates the beads of my life have become a beautiful necklace! Finally I know very well why I was created and why I am alive.
- Jamal: I don't understand anything. Could you tell me what you mean?!

Diana's face shone with a wide smile and she said:

- Diana: I feel the same as you! You are more courageous and more able to make a free choice than me. How beautiful are the times when one is truly honest with oneself!
- George: Now I understand what I want, and I understand Adam and Motee' Ar-Rahman. I understand Levvi, Tom, Katrina, Habib, Urmila, Michael, Janolka, Kach and more importantly, I understand George. Now I understand the meaning

of life!

- Diana: Who are these people you have mentioned?

Amir's eyes filled with tears as he said:

- Amir: I understand you now, George. How wonderful you are!
- George: And I understand the words of the old man about the path to happiness
- Amir: Who is the old man?! Can you guide us to the path to happiness?!
- George: My soul has answered me. I've just heard it. How much I owe you all!
- Amir: Your soul answered you?!
- George: Yes, I've been separated from my soul. My mind and my intellect recognized the way, but I kept my soul far from it.

Amir opened his eyes in amazement and said:

- Amir: It seems like you're describing me. And what did your soul say?
- George: It says to me: 'How can you make this world be connected with the Afterlife, and how can you make the self live a life which is built on true monotheism which gives meaning to life; built on the worship of the One and Only Creator of this vast Universe we live in, Who has no counterpart? This is what I need'

Diana was highly touched as she kept wiping her tears away from her face.

- Diana: The world is connected with the Hereafter?
- George: Yes, and now after understanding these needs of the soul, my soul has become in harmony with knowledge, and the self is in harmony with reason, and they both embrace each other instead of being in conflict. How much their conflict was making me suffer!
- Diana: Amazing! How beautiful are the times when the fog of confusion and troubles becomes lifted! How is your soul now?

George's face was shining as he said,

- George: Now the pleasures of the body and the soul are in harmony. Simpleness and deep profoundness are in harmony. The world and the Hereafter are in harmony, and principles and one's interests are also in harmony. Everything fits in together.
- Diana: Amazing! Wonderful!
- George: I'll travel tomorrow evening to London; to announce the good news to him: that I have understood and found the path to happiness. How unfair I was with myself and how much of my life did I waste.
- Diana: To whom?

- George: The old man who assured to me that my soul is the one that will find the path to happiness.
- Diana: What about the company that you're opening here?
- George: I'll finish its procedures tomorrow morning, and my flight will be at eight o'clock on Friday evening, the day after tomorrow. And I want to tell the old man that I've listened to my soul and my life, and I have found the answer; so my life and my soul have become arranged and make sense. How I would like to express this to all those who are dear to me, as I'm happy now. I'm really happy! I have finally found the path to happiness!
- Diana: I congratulate you, George.
- George: I beg your pardon and excuse me; I'd like to go up to my room now.

George went up to his room and wrote the following to his mailing group:

"Dear those who were with me in the search for the path to happiness,

I have found it! I have found it. Finally, I have found it! How happy I am! I have found the answer to my difficult questions.

You all deserve to have your chests expanded and your hearts lightened.

You all deserve the peace of mind and the light of true monotheism, worshipping the One and only Creator of this vast Universe that we live in.

You all deserve your souls to be happy and for it to reach what it yearns for.

You all deserve to know the correct way to live in this world and to experience the beauty of life.

You all deserve happiness in this world and in the Hereafter.

I wish you all the best and I hope you will all find the path to happiness as I have found it. Yes, I have found it: the way in which my soul, myself and my mind are all in harmony, the world and the Hereafter are in harmony, and pleasure of the body and the soul harmony. Me, myself and I are finally in harmony together after being apart. Everything fits in together perfectly. I've answered all my questions. Indeed, it is the path to happiness.

All praise is due to Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Generous!

Love, George Neason"

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